

Veterans Support Centre CONTACT FRONT



March 2023

Vietnam Veterans Peacekeepers & Peacemakers Association (NSW)
Hastings Manning Macleay Branch Inc.

IMPORTANT CHANGES regarding Veterans Support Centre - see pg 5



Jan 2023 - 50 years since the declaration of the end of the Vietnam War

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

FOD/71/0504/VN

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www.veteranssupport.org.au*

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Hello again, **WE HAVE MOVED - see page 5**

On behalf of all veterans and their loved ones, I want to say a HUGE Thank You to our President for the hours that he has spent seeking out new premises, packing/unpacking and all the associated worry that has gone into this move. Also thank you to Denise for her understanding and patience during this anxious time.

Particularly our President but other volunteers have worked very hard to stop the closure of the Veterans Support Centre.

Thank you to all of those who helped with packing, moving, cleaning and general hard work. We all hope to be settled during March and ready for business. Our Advocate's work has continued and you can make appointments as necessary (ring the office number).

Our new rooms will be on the same floor (different area) as the RSL sub-branch, Wauchope, upstairs and will be used for VSC business and the continuation of the Compensation Advocate's work. Our temporary rooms are in the same area until works are completed. Advocacy work will continue as before, as will our Thursday get together Lunches and our warm welcome for a brew and chat. We are very grateful to the RSL sub-branch President Mr Mick Brownlow for his help in making these arrangements.

The office will be open on **Monday, Tuesday and Thursday from 1000 to 1330.**

Monday - visit the office for any reason and talk to our staff, make appointments to see the Advocate or just drop by for a brew and say "Hello".

Tuesday - Appointment day for talking to the Compensation Advocate, general office also manned for any help or query or just call in and say "Hello".

Thursday again for general enquiries and information, also will be for the weekly Lunch Gathering, 1200 onwards, ordering meals from the Bistro and then enjoying your meal in VSC rooms with fellow vets in the same way as before. If stairs are an issue, help will be available. If the bar or pokies are an issue, there is another entrance which you can use, just ask us before you come along.

Membership of the RSL Club is encouraged but not compulsory. There is a reduced cost for meals and beverages for members.

Most of you will know that the Veterans Support Centre was located in this same building from 1995 to 2011 but also originated in Wauchope thanks to the hard work of Mr Chris Davies when he started up the Pension & Compensation work in 1992 in his own home, from 1994 in Wauchope Hospital rooms and then in the Wauchope RSL sub-branch rooms. 2011 until the end of 2022 has seen Port Macquarie as our 'home' and now we move full circle back to Wauchope.

I am sure that the Veterans Support Centre will quickly settle in and will continue doing the valuable work on behalf of all veterans in our area and further afield. Our services are available, no cost, to **every** veteran that has served in the ADF and their family. We look forward to welcoming ALL veterans to the Veterans Support Centre. Stay well, Jill

Have you checked out our new look web site designed to give veterans easy to find information about what we do and how to contact us?

www.veteranssupport.org.au

The opinions expressed above are mine alone and may not be the opinions of Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia, VVPPAA Inc, or contributors to Contact Front and its readers.



Jill Opie, Editor

VETERANS HEALTH WEEK 2023



Pictures courtesy
of Jody G

And
Tiny
the dog
came
along
too



Above - Veterans gather to celebrate Vets Health Week again this year with a tasty Christmas themed shared meal. It was postponed twice as the Veterans Support Centre was in the process of moving to new premises and the whole organisation was involved.

However, the meal was enjoyed, the chat and friendships as strong as ever and our little furry friend loved all the attention!

Our warm (belated) thanks to Peter Clark for joining us to talk about health and diet issues as well as offering a game and prize. This was won by Jodie from Soldier On and she was so excited that she had to take the selfie above with all of the veterans too, (some vets had a second table outside so some were missed off the photo).

Last but not least, we thank DVA for their funding to make this gathering happen and for their support again this year.

**IMPORTANT CHANGES TO YOUR
VETERANS SUPPORT CENTRE**

**No change to the support and assistance that we offer free of cost
to ALL veterans**

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Australian military uniforms and equipment

Military helmets - an introduction, by Amanda Rebbeck July 2015

In March 1901, the Commonwealth Ministry of Defence took control of all the state military forces. A new Commonwealth uniform pattern was introduced in 1903 which incorporated individual regimental colours, and new badges and buttons to distinguish regiments and corps. The slouch hat was included as headgear, but the colourful uniforms of the colonial forces were replaced with standardised pattern khaki.

This blog covers the basic aspects and some variants of helmets worn by the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) during the First World War and the Second AIF during the Second World War.

First World War

Between 1916 and 1918, on the Western Front, Australians wore the British issue steel helmet as head protection. This helmet was called The Helmet, Steel, Mark I but is also sometimes referred to as the Brodie steel helmet or the Brodie Mark I helmet. These helmets were approved for service on 15 May 1916.

The Mark I Brodie was subsequently adopted by other Commonwealth countries and also the American Expeditionary Force following their entry into the war in 1917. It continued in service long into the 1920s and beyond but was gradually replaced by the Mark II.



L to R - External view of a Helmet, Steel, Mark I; Internal view of a Helmet, Steel, Mark I; A private purchase Helmet, Steel, Mark I; Helmet, Steel, Mark I with a hessian cover

Helmet accessories and variants

By mid-1916 there were several variations in shape and manufacture of the Helmet, Steel, Mark I, including one with a fluted bowl.

Helmet cloth covers were extensively used even after the introduction of textured, non-reflective paint. Covers were made of sacking, cloth or whatever material was available. An adjustable drawstring was added to secure the cover over the helmet.

During early 1917, Captain Richard R Cruise, of the Royal Army Medical Corps, devised a chain mail veil or curtain for attachment to the standard Helmet, Steel, Mark I. This attachment was to prevent soldiers being blinded by shrapnel and shell splinters.

The first pattern veil was in service by mid-1917 but despite the added safety offered, it did not prove popular with combat troops. It is not clear whether the second pattern helmet, of which the Australian War Memorial has an example, was in fact ever issued on the Western Front during the war.



Helmet, Steel, Mark I with second pattern Cruise visor.

Painting of helmets

Prior to the mass production of the Helmet, Steel, Mark I, the decision was made to paint them with a non-reflective textured paint. Individual painting of helmets to reflect the wearer's rank or unit was not something traditionally done by Australian troops. Those soldiers who did mark their helmets were more the exception than the rule. The most extravagantly decorated helmet in the Memorial's collection belongs to Corporal Ernest Albert Corey, 55 Battalion AIF. Corey was awarded the Military Medal an unprecedented four times with his helmet serving as a souvenir and a record of his service in the AIF.

Contd next page



L to R - Front view of Corporal E A Corey's painted helmet. Top view of Corporal E A Corey's painted helmet.

Second World War

From 1936, The Helmet, Steel, Mark I was fitted with an improved liner and an elasticated webbing chin strap. This final variant served until late 1940, when it was superseded by the slightly modified Mark II, which served the British and Commonwealth forces throughout World War II.

During this period, the helmet was also used by the police, the fire brigade, air raid wardens and the Salvation Army. The helmets for the ARP wardens came in two principal variants, black with a white "W" for wardens and white with a black "W" for Chief Wardens.



L to R - A Second World War air raid chief warden's helmet; External view of a Mark II steel helmet; Internal view of a Mark II steel helmet.

Mark III Helmet

The Mark III Helmet was first developed in 1941 and was designed to provide better protection for the side of the head than the Mark II. It had a deeper bowl with a smaller brim and was sometimes referred to as the "turtle" helmet because of its vague resemblance to a turtle.

shell. It was first worn in action on 6 June 1944, the Allied invasion of Normandy. The Mark III was used alongside the Mark II for the remainder of the Second World War.

Slouch hat

The khaki hat, first adopted into Australian military service in 1885 when it was chosen for the newly-formed Victorian Mounted Rifles, featured a high-domed crown and a narrow brim. The brim was turned up on the right side. The colony of New South Wales adopted a felt hat for its mounted troops. In 1890, local military commandants agreed that all their forces, except the artillery (who wore helmets), should adopt a felt hat. This hat was worn with an indented crown, looped up on the left side and decorated with plumage. The hat was first worn overseas in the South African War.

The Defence Act of 1903 combined the former colonial defence forces into a single Australian army. The hat was now universally turned-up on the left hand side. The most well known of various new embellishments was the emu feather plume worn by the Light Horse.

Further standardisation and changes to embellishments occurred from time to time, with the raising of the 1st AIF in 1914, the reorganisation in 1922 of the Australian Military Forces and the introduction of the voluntary militia force in 1930, 1939 and in postwar years.



Slouch hat,

Source - AWM, article by Amanda Rebbeck July 2015

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If you need help accessing DVA's website, call the VSC for help



The **WPPAA** is dedicated to the welfare of all Veterans, Peacekeepers and Peacemakers, ex-service and serving personnel and their families. If you, or someone you know, is ill and you suspect the illness may be a result of military service, please do not hesitate to consult one of our trained volunteers.

We are here to help you and there is no cost associated with our services.



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What Caused The Division Of The Island Of Cyprus?

In 1878 the island of Cyprus in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, came under British control. Its population is made up of both Greek and Turkish Cypriots. The Greek Cypriot majority desired the removal of British rule and union with Greece, known as Enosis. In 1955, the campaign for Enosis was led by Archbishop Makarios of the Cyprus Orthodox Church and by Colonel George Grivas, Head of Ethniki Organosis Kuprion Agoniston - National Organisation of Cypriot Fighters (EOKA). They aimed to achieve Enosis by attacking government and military installations and personnel and by mobilising the civilian population to demonstrate against the British presence.

EOKA launched its campaign on 1 April 1955 with a series of bombing attacks against government offices in the island's capital Nicosia. No one was killed in these initial attacks but EOKA began a campaign of assassination mainly aimed at Greek members of the police force and those who disagreed with the idea of Enosis. A state of emergency was declared by the island's governor, Lord Harding, in November 1955. The British Government started the process of looking for a political solution. In March 1956, Makarios was exiled to the Seychelles, but the emergency continued. Large numbers of British reinforcements arrived and began a series of operations against EOKA centred on the Troodos Mountains.

Gradually British tactics began to have an effect. By 1957 most of EOKA's leaders had been killed or captured, although the organisation stepped up its activities in urban centres. It organised rioting by students and schoolchildren and using execution squads to target police officers, military personnel and their families. These attacks continued throughout 1958, even after Makarios had abandoned his initial demand for Enosis. They finally ended in February 1959 when agreement was reached in London for Cyprus to become an independent republic. Britain would retain two sovereign base areas at Akrotiri and Dhekeila.

HMS HERMES during the Cyprus emergency

In August 1960 Cyprus became a republic but, in the following decades, it was plagued with violence between the Greek and Turkish communities. In 1974 a Greek military coup, which aimed to unite the island with mainland Greece, led to a Turkish invasion and the division of the island between Turkish Northern Cyprus and the Greek Cypriot Republic of Cyprus. Cyprus remains divided to this day.



Left - Men of the 1st Battalion, The Royal Ulster Rifles search loads carried on a donkey at a road block during the EOKA Emergency in Cyprus.

Right - Wessex helicopters and commandos on board HMS HERMES during the Cyprus emergency, 1974.



Source - The Imperial War Museum, England

Turkey-Greece Relations Tense Over Cyprus, Aegean Islands

Tensions between Greece and Turkey over the divided island of Cyprus appear to be escalating. Turkey says it's increasing its military presence on the island in response to Washington's lifting of an arms embargo against the Greek Cypriot administration.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu criticized the United States Friday for its stance toward Greece, saying it has become a toy of Athens in the Cyprus dispute. He said the ones standing with the Greeks just for the sake of pleasing the Greeks should not expect friendship from Turkey.

Earlier this week, Cavusoglu announced that Turkey will increase its military presence on Cyprus after Washington lifted its military arms embargo on the Greek Cypriot administration. The Mediterranean Island has been divided between Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities since 1974. The Greek Cypriot administration is the only internationally recognized government.

Washington's action comes as U.S. State Department spokesman Ned Price appeared to offer support to Athens amid rising tensions with Ankara over Greek islands in the Aegean Sea. "Greece's sovereignty over these islands is not in question," said Price. "But we call on countries, including our allies, to respect territorial integrity and sovereignty and avoid actions that inflame tensions."

Ankara has condemned Greece's militarization of some of its islands close to Turkish shores, which Turkey claims violate an international agreement. Athens insists it's only protecting its territory from Turkish threats. University of Athens political scientist Cengiz Aktar said the Greek government is calculating that it has Washington's support and is in no mood to back down from what it considers Turkish bullying. "There is a common wisdom in Greece, don't belittle small countries. We have a live example of Ukraine and Russia. I mean, yes, the Greeks are ready," Aktar said.

Turkish-Greek tensions are nothing new, with the two countries going to the brink of war in 1996 over an uninhabited islet. U.S. intervention prevented open hostilities. But with Turkey saying Greece is using U.S.-supplied weapons to militarize its islands, observers say Washington's status as an honest broker is in question. Asli Aydintasbas, a visiting fellow of the Brookings Institution, a Washington research group, said she is worried the countries are moving closer to war. "I think this is significant and potentially very dangerous," said Aydintasbas. "Clearly, both countries feel each other as a threat. We are used to occasional flare-ups in this relationship, but I think right now, the global environment is very uncertain, chaotic, and almost conducive to a military confrontation between Turkey and Greece."

For now, neither Athens nor Ankara appears ready to step back. Turkish Foreign Minister Cavusoglu said Friday that Turkey is prepared to resolve tensions diplomatically but warned Turkey wouldn't hesitate to use hard power if diplomacy failed and Turkish interests are threatened.

Right - Turkish Cypriot leader, Ersin Tatar, stands on a military vehicle as he reviews the military parade marking the 48th anniversary of the 1974 Turkish invasion in the Turkish occupied area of the divided capital of Nicosia, Cyprus, July 2022



Article by Dorian Jones Aug 2022, VOA News Sept 2022



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The Vietnam War 1962 - 1975

Served: 49,211
Died: 520
Wounded: 2,396
Men awarded the Victoria Cross: 4

Australian support for South Vietnam in the early 1960s was in keeping with the policies of other nations to stem the spread of communism in Europe and Asia. In 1961 and 1962 Ngo Dinh Diem, South Vietnam's leader, repeatedly requested security assistance. Australia responded with 30 military advisers. Their arrival in South Vietnam in July 1962 was the beginning of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War.

In August 1964 the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) also sent a flight of Caribou transports to the port town of Vung Tau. By early 1965, when it had become clear that South Vietnam could not stave off the communist insurgents and the North Vietnamese for more than a few months, the US commenced a major escalation of the war. By the end of the year it had committed 200,000 troops to the conflict.

As part of the build-up, the US government requested support from other countries. The Australian government dispatched the 1st Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (1RAR) in June 1965 to serve alongside the US 173rd Airborne Brigade in Bien Hoa province.

In March 1966 the government announced the dispatch of a taskforce to replace 1RAR, consisting of two battalions and support services (including a RAAF squadron of Iroquois helicopters), to be based at Nui Dat, Phuoc Tuy province. Unlike 1RAR, the taskforce was assigned its own area of operations and included conscripts who had been called up under the National Service Scheme, introduced in 1964.

All nine RAR battalions served in the taskforce at one time or another - at the height of Australian involvement it numbered some 8,500 troops. A third RAAF squadron (of Canberra jet bombers) was also committed in 1967 and destroyers of the Royal Australian Navy joined US patrols off the North Vietnamese coast. The Royal Australian Navy (RAN) also contributed a clearance diving team and a helicopter detachment that operated with the US Army from October 1967.

In August 1966 a company of 6RAR was engaged in one of Australia's heaviest actions of the war, near Long Tan. After three hours of fierce fighting, during which it seemed the Australian forces would be overrun by the enemy's greater numbers, the Viet Cong withdrew, leaving behind 245 dead and carrying away many more casualties. 18 Australians were killed and 24 wounded. The battle eliminated communist dominance over the province.



Right & Below
unsw images



B2 Spares store Fire Support Base Kerry, Feb 1969

Photo by Alf Lee



1968 began with a major offensive by the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army, launched during the Vietnamese lunar new year holiday period, known as “Tet”. Not only the timing but the scale of the offensive came as a complete surprise, taking in cities, towns, and military installations in South Vietnam. While the “Tet Offensive” ultimately ended in military defeat for the communists, it was propaganda victory. US military planners began to question if a decisive victory could ever be achieved and the offensive stimulated the US public opposition to the war. For Australian troops, the effects of the offensive were felt around their base at Nui Dat, where a Viet Cong attack on targets around Baria, the provincial capital, was repulsed with few casualties.

By 1969 anti-war protests were gathering momentum in Australia. Opposition to conscription mounted, as more people came to believe the war could not be won. A “don’t register” campaign to dissuade young men from registering for conscription gained increasing support and some of the protests grew violent. The US government began to implement a policy of “Vietnamisation”, the term coined for a gradual withdrawal of US forces that would leave the war in the hands of the South Vietnamese.

At the end of April 1970 US and South Vietnamese troops were ordered to cross the border into Cambodia. While the invasion succeeded in capturing large quantities of North Vietnamese arms, destroying bunkers and sanctuaries, and killing enemy soldiers, it ultimately proved disastrous. By bringing combat into Cambodia, the invasion drove many people to join the underground opposition, the Khmer Rouge, irreparably weakening the Cambodian government.

When the Khmer Rouge came to power in April 1975 it imposed a cruel and repressive regime that killed several million Cambodians and left the country with internal conflict that continues today. The extension of the war into a sovereign state, formally neutral, inflamed anti-war sentiment in the United States and provided the impetus for further anti-war demonstrations in Australia. In the well-known Moratoriums of 1970, more than 200,000 people gathered to protest against the war, in cities and towns throughout the country.

By late 1970 Australia had also begun to wind down its military effort in Vietnam. The 8th Battalion departed in November but, to make up for the decrease in troop numbers, strength was increased and its efforts, like those of the taskforce, became concentrated in Phuoc Tuy province. The withdrawal of troops and all air units continued throughout 1971 – the last battalion left Nui Dat on 7 November, while a handful of advisers remained in Vietnam the following year.

In December 1972 they became the last Australian troops to come home, with their unit having seen continuous service in South Vietnam for ten and a half years. Australia’s participation in the war was formally declared at an end when the Governor-General issued a proclamation on 11 January 1973. ***((Note from Editor - this date is viewed by many as the official ending of the Vietnam War))*** The only combat troops remaining in Vietnam were a platoon guarding the Australian embassy in Saigon, which was withdrawn in June 1973. In early 1975 the communists launched a major offensive in the north of South Vietnam, resulting in the fall of Saigon on 30 April. In the previous month a RAAF detachment of 7-8 Hercules transports flew humanitarian missions to aid civilian refugees displaced by the fighting and carried out the evacuation of Vietnamese orphans (Operation Babylift), before finally taking out embassy staff on 25 April.

50,000 Australians, including ground troops, air force and navy personnel, served in Vietnam. 520 died as a result of the war and almost 2,400 were wounded. The war was the cause of the greatest social and political dissent in Australia since the conscription referendums of WWI. Many draft resisters, conscientious objectors, and protesters were fined or gaoled, while (some) soldiers met a hostile reception on their return.



Above right - An aerial photograph showing five guns of 12th Field Regt, RAA, in action during a fire mission at FSB Pamela - AWM



An Aerial photograph showing five guns of the 12th Field Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery, in action during a fire mission at Fire Support Base Pamela. [AWM 010/71/0317/001]

Veterans remember 50 years since the end of the Vietnam War



These 2 pages show some of the items on display at the gathering to commemorate the end of the Vietnam War



Veterans remember 50 years since the end of the Vietnam War



Above - Veteran Mal Butler gives a talk about aspects of the Vietnam War



The slide show scenes in Vietnam brought back some memories



Above - Veterans Support Centre President, Bill Wagner with one of the photographic displays



Above - Veterans Support Centre President, Bill Wagner, explains the significance of the flag to the audience



For the Fallen

Poem by Robert Laurence Binyon (1869-1943), published in *The Times* newspaper on 21 September 1914.

With proud thanksgiving, a mother for her children,
England mourns for her dead across the sea.
Flesh of her flesh they were, spirit of her spirit,
Fallen in the cause of the free.

Solemn the drums thrill: Death august and royal
Sings sorrow up into immortal spheres.
There is music in the midst of desolation
And a glory that shines upon our tears.

They went with songs to the battle, they were young,
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow.
They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted,
They fell with their faces to the foe.

**They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.**

They mingle not with their laughing comrades again;
They sit no more at familiar tables of home;
They have no lot in our labour of the day-time;
They sleep beyond England's foam.

But where our desires are and our hopes profound,
Felt as a well-spring that is hidden from sight,
To the innermost heart of their own land they are known
As the stars are known to the Night;

As the stars that shall be bright when we are dust,
Moving in marches upon the heavenly plain,
As the stars that are starry in the time of our darkness,
To the end, to the end, they remain.



All items were displayed by Vietnam Veterans and their families and from the Veterans Support Centre archives

50 years
since the
official
declaration
of the end
of the
Vietnam War



These sheets were displayed at the Veterans commemoration to mark 50 years since the ending of the Vietnam War and show the names and/or photographs of 500 Australians who died during the Vietnam War, mostly young and many there not by choice.
The final total is 521 or 523 died (depending on the source)



There were whispers on the parade ground
When the news first hit the lines
That soon we would be heading off to war
But the top brass scotched these rumours
And put our minds at ease
As we settled back to military grind once more

Within a month, our kitbags packed
No time to say good-byes
We climbed aboard the carrier which waited on the tide
And as we milled around the flight deck rail
Our spirits still were high
It made me proud to look upon the men I stood beside

The colour-sergeant moved around
With his reassuring smile
He brought an air of confidence to many doubting minds
For we knew he had so many times
Fought on foreign lands
Against the odds had triumphed over enemies of all kinds

Old Tom the carpenter stood among us
His face a solid mask
And dryly told us all he thought "this war would never last
But Jacky Hill, our sergeant, unruffled by the fuss
Just settled back and rolled a smoke
And watched the boats go past

That night while we were sleeping
The anchor chain was drawn
The convoy headed out to sea, our journey just begun
Eleven days we parried forth
Until we reached the war-torn land
Where many brave men rose at dawn, but saw no setting sun





These pages show some of the veterans and partners at the commemoration, too many to name.



Port Macquarie News' issue Fri 20th Jan 2023

By Emily Walker

Reproduced with permission from The Editor, Port Macquarie News

Commemorating 50 years since the declaration to end Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War

It was a night of camaraderie and remembrance at the Wauchope RSL when veterans gathered to commemorate 50 years since the end of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War.

Memorabilia, maps and newspapers commemorating the 523 servicemen, and seven Australian civilians, who lost their lives in the war, were spread out across the room for the guests. Wauchope RSL president Mal Butler, who organised the evening, acknowledged those who served.

"We're here to commemorate the end of the Vietnam War and we're here to honour those people," he said "Without people like them, we wouldn't be here."

Severely wounded

Mr Butler served in Vietnam in 1966 with the Royal Australian engineers, who played a key role in the Cu Chi tunnels. He later returned in 1971 as part of the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam (AATTV).

He had only been there for two months as an advisor for the South Vietnamese army when he was severely wounded. As an advisor dressed in the South Vietnamese uniform, his identity as an Australian was hidden and he was kept unconscious for 13 days. "[My family] had no idea if I was dead or alive," he said. "I had two small children... it was terrible at the time."

The AATTV stayed in Vietnam after the 1st Australian Task Forces were withdrawn in 1972, with four members from the unit later awarded the Victoria Cross (VC). It was on January 11, 1973, that the Governor-General issued a proclamation to end Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War. Then, on January 27, 1973, the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam was signed by representatives of the South Vietnamese communist forces, North Vietnam, South Vietnam, and the United States.

But members of AATTV remained in Vietnam for sometime afterwards.

Celebrating a local hero

Mr Butler took time to commemorate Peter Rock, owner of Rock Motorcycles and fellow Vietnam veteran. Mr Rock who was part of the 8th Battalion, served in Vietnam from 1969 to 1970.

During an operation in the Long Hai area, Mr Rock's fellow soldier Douglas Hazell came into trouble. "He trod on a mine, had both legs blown off, lost an eye, and had all sorts of shrapnel wounds throughout his body," said Mr Butler. "If he didn't get help within a few minutes, he would have been dead from loss of blood."

It was Mr Rock who asked for a bayonet to tap for surrounding landmines and rescued Mr Hazell, who is now still alive today. "Whether I saved him or not is contentious I suppose but I did what I could," said Mr Rock. "My sections commander, Joe Danyluk, only died last October and he was shredded. "His injuries were worse than Douglas."

The 8th Battalion were awarded with the South Vietnamese Meritorious Unit Commendation including Cross of Gallantry with Palm Unit Citation for its operations in Long Hai.

Mr Rock was one of three from the battalion to be individually awarded a Cross of Gallantry with Bronze Star. "I was fortunate because I went over on the ship... came over, came back," he said. "I was only ever in one platoon, one section [and] there was a lot of continuity so I was really lucky."



President RSL Wauchope sub branch and Vietnam veteran Mal Butler looks at the many faces of those who died in the Vietnam War. Picture by Emily Walker



Veteran Peter Rock was awarded for his actions during the Vietnam War. Picture by Emily Walker

Remembering loved ones

Alongside the veterans gathered at the RSL were family members remembering those who had served, like Lyn Thomas who was attending on behalf of her late husband Dave Thomas. The couple, who had been together since they were 16, had married just months before Mr Thomas had to leave for training. The couple wrote to each other every day with Mrs Thomas still owning the over 300 letters she received from her husband. "He didn't tell me a lot of things," Mrs Thomas said. "He just talked about the nonsense and the camaraderie [and] he loved all the blokes."

Mr Thomas served in the Vietnam War from 1968 to 1969 and was involved in the battle Coral-Balmoral. "He did come back in the February of '69 and then we had a turbulent life from then on because of [the war]," Mrs Thomas said. "We stuck together through thick and thin but there were some very hard times." Mrs Thomas recalled the hardships that her husband endured after returning including the impacts of PTSD, negative public responses, and initial treatment of Vietnam veterans by the RSL.

But over time, conditions improved especially after the 1987 Australian Vietnam Forces Welcome Home parade in Sydney. "Before that happened he'd not stayed connected with his mates," Mrs Thomas said. "But from that welcome home parade, he connected back with them and stayed connected until the end. "He got back on track himself just by seeking help and he changed."

Mr Thomas went on to help other veterans, particularly those trying to receive their pensions but later had to pull out after the work began to take its toll on him. In 2017 at 71 years of age, Mr Thomas was diagnosed with leukaemia and later passed away on May 30, 2018.

Mrs Thomas said it was important for family members of Vietnam veterans to attend events like this. "It is really special," she said. "I'm glad I've come along for him because... it would have been important for him to come to this."

Leaving a Legacy

The hardships faced by Vietnam veterans has left an ongoing legacy for future generations.

President of the Hastings Manning Macleay Vietnam Veterans Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Association Bill Wagner said attitudes towards the veterans have changed a lot since the end of the war.

"It's a hard thing to say but the older fellows didn't accept it as a war," he said. "But over the years we've been accepted and we're looked up to now which is a big thing."

Vietnam veterans have been largely credited to helping create support systems for the ex-service community. The Vietnam Veterans' Counselling Service (now known as Open Arms) was established by the Australian Government in 1982 but founded by veterans. The organisation has gone on to be available to veterans of all conflicts, their families and other members of the ex-service community.

"When we came back from Vietnam, we virtually started a revolution," said Mr Wagner. "It's not only for the Vietnam veterans- it rolls on now to all the other conflicts."

Now 50 years on since the end of Australia's involvement in the war, Mr Wagner said that there is still work to be done to help ex-servicemen.

"We've been fortunate in one way that we've opened up the doors for these other fellows to get help," Mr Wagner said. "We've still got a long way to go."



Lyn Thomas attended the Wauchope RSL in memory of her late husband Dave Thomas. Picture by Emily Walker



Bill Wagner holds a special Australian flag made for the 523 who were killed. Picture by Emily Walker

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Assorted: Army, Navy, Airforce bumper stickers



Assorted: Stubby holders



Please see staff at the Office every Thursday from 10:30 - 13:00

Thank you to our members, advertisers and supporters for their continuing support of our Veterans Support Centre

REPORTS Dec 2022 - Feb 2023

President's Report

After searching for suitable premises, The Committee and I are happy to advise that the office is now situated inside the Wauchope RSL Club. This has been made possible due to the support of the RSL Sub-Branch President Mick Brownlow and the Club Limited President Mal Butler. This relocation assists us financially and will allow us to assist the veteran community. Many thanks to all others who were involved.

Our phone numbers are remaining the same but we now have new office hours. Our office will be open Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. The hours are 10 am-1.30 pm. **Closed Wednesday and Friday.** The RSL Sub-Branch will be using the office area on a Wednesday for their pension and welfare work. I can assure members that our pension work and the sub-branch pension work are separate and will be kept confidential and secure. This will allow both offices to operate using their own computers for all pension and advocacy work.



President - Bill Wagner

Appointments can be made on a Tuesday by ringing the Vietnam Veterans Office on our existing numbers and booking an appointment. Other arrangements can be made if necessary. Presently we are in the process of fitting out the new office area to suit both organisations with necessary phone connections and printer. Our official opening date is 2nd March. Our Thursday get togethers will still be happening. There will be coffee and tea available in the upstairs area near the new office. Lunch will be able to be purchased if you wish in the Reflections restaurant where a lunch menu is available. We can book a table early on a Thursday depending on numbers.

Please lets all get together and resume our banter and humour and solve the problems of the world on a Thursday, 1200 as before, starting on 2nd March..

There will be a Conference held at Bankstown Sports Club in March with representatives from most Vietnam Veteran Sub-Branches attending. This allows all Branches to discuss any issues that may concern us.

Once again, thank you to the RSL Sub-Branch and RSL Club Ltd for their assistance in continuing our work for all veterans.

Members, please keep your memberships up to date. Any questions regarding our relocation, please don't hesitate to ring the office on 6581 5230.

Many thanks, Bill Wagner

Treasurer's Report

With our move to the Wauchope RSL Sub-branch we will be able to continue operating financially.

The rent at the previous location was our major problem and now we can continue to provide a location for our Compensation Advocate, as well as a site for social functions.

Peter Dorman

**Treasurer
Peter Dorman**



**Membership Officer
Trevor Morrow**

Membership Officers Report (February 2023)

Welcome to the New Year!

This is just a short report to bring you up to date regarding membership matters for 2023.

Sub-Branch Membership is based on the **Calendar Year**, so it is now time to renew your membership for 2023.

As at 13 February 2023 we have **35** financial members for this year.

Note that for every membership payment of \$30.00 made here at your local sub-branch, **\$12.50 is retained by your sub-branch for local use.**

To those who have renewed their membership for this year, thank you!

Please stay Covid safe and well!


Trevor Morrow

Membership Officer

REPORTS Dec 2022 - Feb 2023

Compensation Advocate's Report

I continue to assist veterans with their compensation and pension claims. It can be a long slow process with DVA and their current system but I can help to make a good start to your claim with the correct wording (very important) and with all necessary paperwork. Make an appointment to see me by ringing the office or to make a time for a phone call to discuss your case.

I am also a JP and will be happy to help with any JP related issues or signings (fee free of course).

Mike



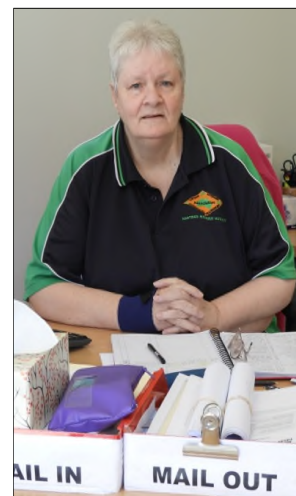
**Compensation Advocate
Mike Opie**

AND TWO FOND FAREWELLS TO LYN AND PETER

The President and all members of the Veterans Support Centre wish you both every good wish for the future and thank you for all of your time and hard work over many years



**Peter Millen
Welfare Officer
retired**



**Lyn Hancock
Office Manager
retired**

I am sorry to report that I have stepped out of my role of Welfare Officer. I will still support the VSC and keep in touch and I wish you all good health and the support of good mates.

Peter Millen

The President thanks Peter for his many years as Compensation Advocate then Welfare Officer and the dedication, hard work and compassion he has given to his role, not to mention the huge mileage that he has clocked up when visiting veterans in their homes.

All the very best for your well earned "retirement" Peter.
From the President and all members.

And a huge thank you from all of the many veterans that have been helped by Peter and Lyn over their many years with the Veterans Support Centre

Sadly Lyn is not able to volunteer at the VSC at the moment. Lyn has decided that she will take a break from her work with VSC and we all thank her for years of dedication.

Lyn has kept the stats, mail, typing and all office tasks in order and has organised the chaos, empathised with our veterans and organised the staff volunteers. Take care, from all of your veteran friends and especially the VSC volunteers. We'll miss you and hope you will drop in when you can.

From the President and all members.

Veterans heal through power of music

David Cox, left, presents Daniel Bridges with a guitar as a part of the Guitars for Veterans Australia Program. Dating back to the American Civil War, music therapy has been used to treat veterans.

Guitars for Veterans Australia provides a therapeutic alternative to struggling veterans through the healing power of music and community. One of those veterans is Daniel Bridges, who found it hard to find his identity after leaving the military. Searching for ways to fit in, he obtained help from organisations but still found things difficult until discovering Guitars for Veterans.

“It took me years to feel okay,” Mr Bridges said. “I was going through a real rough time four years ago, and found out about the program through a therapist. It helps, waking up and playing the guitar, not reaching for the other vices.”

Posted to the 7th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, Mr Bridges did a tour in Afghanistan in 2012 but, after returning, found it hard fitting in. Jobs in retail and hospitality didn't provide the same level of fulfilment that Army did. “It's a job like no other. When you're a soldier you have a certain identify, you become that identity,” he said. “Guitars for Veterans popped up and I thought, that's something I can add to my tool kit.”

Now on his third guitar, Mr Bridges keeps in touch with charity founder David Cox, who has supported him to get singing lessons. Mr Cox was inspired by Guitars for Veterans in America and began an Australian chapter.

He left the military and went into commercial life, but others didn't have such an easy transition. “People I served with didn't really have that same experience, so this is a way for me, who likes music and had that good experience, to give back,” Mr Cox said.

Guitars for Veterans Australia secures guitars from donations, with each veteran who joins the program receiving one. Since starting in 2017, more than 350 veterans have participated in the 10-week syllabus. Up to five at a time progress through the course. “It changes their outlook on life, and they say that it opens a window of serenity in their head,” Mr Cox said. “For some, it's a place of retreat and relief and gives an avenue to express themselves.”

With five one-hour lessons, participants are able to understand the guitar and play basic chords. Those willing to continue can undertake a masterclass. A Deakin University research paper supports the claim that music therapy helps to improve the mental health of veterans and alleviates PTSD symptoms. It found song-writing lowered PTSD symptoms by 33 per cent over four weeks and decreased depression. The study found short-term music therapy attention and arousal regulation treatment helps people with PTSD feel more independent in their recovery and reduces stress anxiety.

Mr Cox said once they had more veterans playing, he would like to work with local RSLs on jam sessions. The charity released an album titled *Where Words Fail, Music Speaks* in 2018, featuring songs from veterans-turned-artists. “Hopefully we will be able to invite artists to come in, teach and inspire with their music,” Mr Cox said. “We have been helping vets with song-writing. Long term, we would love to release an album with our own Guitars for Veterans artists being recognised.”

To find out more, or join the program,
visit

www.guitarsforvetsaustralia.com

Source - 29 December 2022 , Defence website and also VetAffairs



David Cox, left, presents Daniel Bridges with a guitar as a part of the Guitars for Veterans Australia Program.

The Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway

The Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway covers more than 800 metres from Rhodes Station to Concord Hospital in Sydney's inner-west. It runs along the mangrove-studded shores of Brays Bay on the Parramatta River.

What is it?

The Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway is a unique tribute to the bravery of Australian troops who fought through atrocious conditions and against vastly superior enemy numbers in the Papua-New Guinea campaign of July 1942 to January 1943. With US support, the Australians inflicted on the Japanese Imperial Army its first defeat.

The Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway is a community project involving Concord Council, the Department of Employment, Education and Training, Concord Rotary, RSL NSW, the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, and Concord Hospital.

The plans, launched in 1994 under the "Australia Remembers" Program, proposed an 800m long Memorial Walkway to be constructed along Brays Bay, which runs alongside Concord Road from Ryde Bridge towards Homebush Bay Drive and linking Rhodes Station to Concord Hospital.



More ADF support for flood-hit areas

About 310 ADF personnel are now involved in Operation Flood Assist 22-2 as part of the Australian Government's response to flooding in Victoria and NSW.

In Victoria, about 280 personnel and high clearance vehicles are supporting flood-affected residents in the Echuca, Rochester, Bendigo and Shepparton areas.

Six ADF personnel are seconded to the State Coordination Centre to assist with planning and logistics.

Two CH-47 helicopters and about 30 personnel are assisting with the evacuation and relocation of communities, lifting and moving heavy equipment, provision and resupply of essential food supplies to isolated communities, and provision of feed and fodder for livestock.

Tasks have included: filling and distributing sandbags, transport support to isolated families and emergency services stakeholders with high-clearance vehicles, diversion of water from a small dam and construction of three levees, door knocking to support flood-affected residents, and clean-up activities.

In NSW, a helicopter is available for night search and rescue flights, and about 100 personnel are on standby to provide support.

The ADF remains postured to provide additional support to State Emergency Services should a request be received via National Emergency Management Australia.

Members from the ADF's Army Logistic Training Centre conduct sandbagging activities in support of the local community in Shepparton, Victoria.



By Sergeant Matthew Bickerton, Defence News Oct 2022; Photo: Corporal Jonathan Goedhart

VETERANS Wellness Programs

Entitled Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) clients may be referred for clinically necessary Exercise Physiology treatment by their General Practitioner on a valid D904 referral form.

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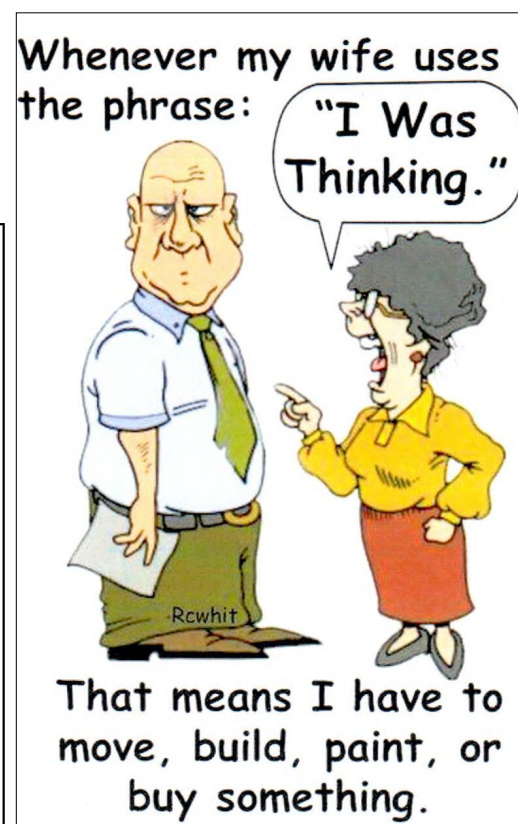
info@keystonehealth.com.au



www.keystonehealth.com.au



Three boys see a fire engine with a dog go by and discuss what his job is. 'Crowd control?' says one boy. 'He's the mascot.' says the second boy. The third boy nods sagely: 'He finds fire hydrants.'



Dog: suspect spotted 45 meters away, behind a tree
 Sniper: Affirmative, looking for target
 Dog: suspect is brown
 Sniper: Ok
 Dog: Walking East
 Sniper: Ok
 Dog: Carrying a nut
 Sniper:...are you looking at squirrels again?
 Dog: Sorry



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"I'd better not eat that"
 (said no dog ever)



For Peggy the slightly greedy puggle



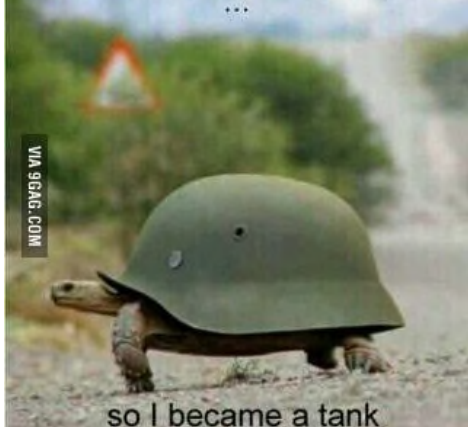
NATO Commander in the desert asked a group of troops. "If you found a scorpion in your tent what would you do?"

ARMY said "I would throw a boot at it."

Marine said "I would pick it up by the tail/stinger & eat it."

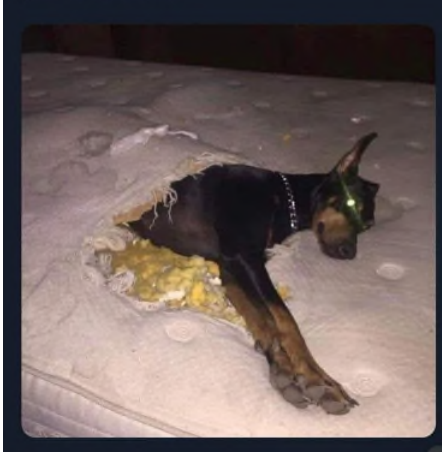
Air Force said "I would call Room service & ask why is there a tent in my Room?"

they told me i could be anything



so I became a tank

when you spend the night at a friend's house and they don't give you a blanket



"Do I believe in safe sex? Course I do. I have a handrail around the bed." - Ken Dodd



To Err Is Human
 To Blame It On
 Someone Else
 Shows Management
 Potential

Vietnam Veterans Peacekeepers & Peacemakers Association Inc.

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FROM Monday 27th Feb 2023
See page 5 for details

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Partners of Veterans from all conflicts are always welcome.
For any further information contact
Tineke Dalton on 6586 3461



Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial, Anzac Parade, Canberra

Source - Honesthistory.net