

Veterans Support Centre

CONTACT FRONT

May/June 2023



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



ANZAC DAY 2023

Services and Marches were held in Wauchope, (right) Port Macquaire (above) and Laurieton (left) as well as so many places around the country and attended by veterans, family members and communities



*There are NO COSTS to access the services such as Pensions, Welfare and advice provided by Veterans Support Centre, Hastings Manning Macleay Branch VVPPAA Inc
At Wauchope Wellbeing Centre, located within the Wauchope Club Ltd (upstairs)*

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At Wauchope Wellbeing Centre, located within the Wauchope Club Ltd (upstairs)

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TUESDAY general enquiries, appointments with the Compensation Advocate, company and a brew
THURSDAY general enquiries, Thursday Lunches as before, 1200 'til finished , order your meals in
Bistro and gather upstairs for a yarn

Thank you: To all donors, supporters and advertisers: Your continued support has helped us to keep our doors open for veterans, serving and ex-serving personnel who need our help. Members are encouraged to support businesses whose advertisements appear in this newsletter.

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<p>Contact details - (all volunteers)</p> <p>President : Bill Wagner</p> <p>Vice President : Bill Starrenburg</p> <p>Treasurer : Peter Dorman</p> <p>Compensation Advocate : Mike Opie</p> <p>Members Officer : Trevor Morrow</p> <p>Editor : Jill Opie</p> <p>Reception : Volunteers</p> <p>Q Store : Committee members</p> <p>Postal Address: Hastings Manning Macleay VPPAA Inc. PO Box 5330 Port Macquarie 2444</p> <p>Telephone: 02 6581 5230 If unanswered, leave a message & we will call you back asap</p> <p>Email: hmmvppaa@c2a.com.au</p> <p>Advocate email : vetpensions@gmail.com</p> <p>Website: www.veteranssupport. org.au</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <th colspan="2">From the Editor's Desk</th></tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="697 557 1465 655"> <p>Hello again, PLEASE READ THROUGH PGS 6, 7, 8, 9 reports and changes that our President wants to bring to your attention</p> <p>Two friends have spoken to me about the Remount program for veterans and I have done some research and included its history, re-enactment and current help for our veterans. Thank you ladies.</p> <p>After gathering for ANZAC Day maybe it is a time for us all to reflect on our veterans and their health, mental and physical. If you can go up to a vet and say "How are you going mate", it may be their chance to let someone know that they are not doing too well at the moment. Listening is important. 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PRESIDENT'S REPORT - MAY 2023

The new office is operating well with plenty of room for the pension and welfare work and space for the gents to enjoy their Thursday get togethers. In months to come there will be more changes to be made to allow for more office area.

Anzac Day Commemorations were well attended with large numbers at both the dawn and main services. This shows the continuing community support to keep the Anzac tradition alive. The older members of the Wauchope Sub-Branch enjoyed being chauffeured around in the veteran cars.

The Conference held in Bankstown in March was well attended by the many Sub-Branches. One of the main issues is declining membership and also Branches finding it harder to attract the younger service personnel. Thinking about that issue, Vietnam Veterans wanted to do it on their own so not a lot has changed. All we can do is keep offering our assistance and support.

DVA Deputy Commissioner Victoria Benz spoke on behalf of DVA offering insight as to what DVA has been doing to speed up claims and other issues concerning the veteran community. At the conclusion of her talk, she asked for questions on issues that had been concerning members and their sub-branches. The majority of questions were answered directly and others were taken under advisement with answers to be forwarded to Granville for distribution to all branches.

PLEASE READ - Victoria Benz's presentation and questions answered at the conference (OVER TO PAGES 6, 7)



President - Bill Wagner

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 (no charge of course).

Mike



Compensation Advocate
Mike Opie

Membership Officer's Report

This is my quarterly 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.

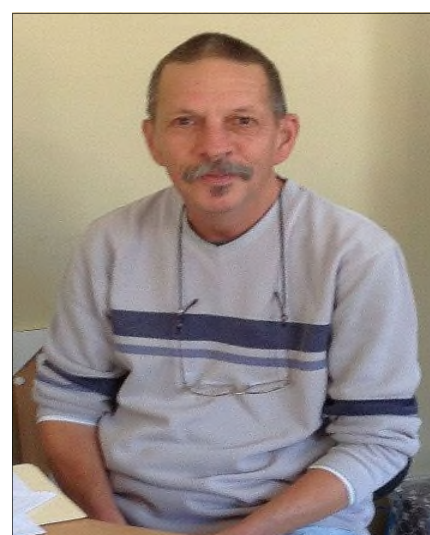
As at 27 April we have 57 financial members for this year.

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 that have renewed their membership for this year, thank you!

Please stay covid safe and well!

Trevor Morrow Membership Officer



Membership Officer
Trevor Morrow

Summary of Presentation by DVA Representative – Deputy Commissioner, Victoria Benz

“On 11 August 2022, the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide released its Interim Report, which provided 13 recommendations to the Australian Government. The recommendations centred around issues identified by the Royal Commission as requiring urgent and immediate action. DVA has since taken action on a number of recommendations of the Report.

Recommendation 1 - Simplify and harmonise the framework for veterans’ compensation, rehabilitation and other entitlement with draft legislation to be available by early 2024.

DVA has developed a pathway for simplification and harmonisation of veteran compensation and rehabilitation legislation and is consulting with stakeholders on the way forward. The new single Act will be based on the current MCRA Act with melding of elements of the VEA and DRCA to suit all veteran circumstances. There will be no reductions in existing entitlements, however TPI is likely to be replaced with SRDP.

The functions and composition of the AAT is also under review as part of the harmonisation process.

Victoria Benz proceeded to give a number of sample case studies to demonstrate how the new harmonised Act may work. Members of the Meeting were encouraged to provide input and suggestions to the consultative process.

Recommendation 2 – Eliminate the Claims backlog

DVA is currently addressing the back-log in claims and has hired additional staff to meet the demand. The current backlogs are slowly reducing with Liability backlog down to 29,000, from 36,000. PI claims are now at 12,000. Average processing time to Claim approval is at 400 days.

Multi Act claims have been simplified by giving them to a single delegate rather than multiple delegates for each Act. Hiring and training of new staff continues.

Recommendation 3 – Improve the administration of the DVA claims system by 1 July 2024. The changes pursued should aim to improve veterans’ experience of the claims system, remove complexity from the system and enhance efficiency in claims processing.

The Government recognises that some veterans and families do not have a good experience accessing support they deserve. Funding of \$85M has been provided to improve the veterans’ experience of the claims system, remove complexity and enhance efficiency in supporting veterans and families navigating the veteran support system. Additional measures to improve the claims system include a major upgrade of DVA’s IT systems to improve claims management and feedback of information to clients.

Recommendations 9-13 – Improve access to information to clients

Recommendations 9 through to 13 focus on improving access to information. Initiatives that respond to these recommendations have now been implemented. There is now more support and education to individuals who seek access to information or records held by Defence and DVA.

As part of an aligned response to the Interim Report, these initiatives have been implemented across both Departments. This will ensure greater consistency when applicants seek access to information from either DVA or Defence, and that more support is available when needed.

Initiatives include the establishment of an Information Access Unit in Defence and DVA, which will serve as a single point of contact for information requests and provide dedicated support to applicants when needed. Additionally, administrative release and redaction guidelines, and educational content on information access pathways, consent, and redactions, have been published on DVA and Defence’s websites. Ultimately, these measures will ensure a better understanding among applicants of how and where to access information in the quickest and easiest way.

You can read the administrative release and redaction guidelines on DVA’s website. The new education material is also located on DVA’s website. To contact DVA’s Information Access Unit, you can phone **1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)** or email **Information.Access@dva.gov.au**

The response to Recommendations 9 through to 13 was informed by a comprehensive co-design process, which saw serving and ex-serving ADF members, veterans, families, advocates and representatives provide feedback on what future experiences of accessing information should look like. Incorporating this feedback into the initiatives we have introduced has kept the Defence and veteran community at the heart of our response to the Interim Report.

The Australian Government is committed to improving the delivery of support and services to ADF serving and ex-serving members, veterans, families, and advocates. While we have made significant progress, we recognise that more work needs to be done. We will continue our response to the Interim Report, which will involve ongoing engagement with Defence and the veteran community. We would like to thank everyone who has participated in the Royal Commission and related consultations to-date.”

Q & A session

- Q. Some GP's are, more frequently, not accepting the DVA White Card
A. DVA is aware of this situation but indicate there is no legal obligation for doctors to accept DVA cards. Its rebate to doctors is 115% that of Medicare. Can only suggest shopping around for a friendly GP. DVA is looking at its current turnaround time for paying medical providers.
- Q. There is a concern with the recent trend of "woke" emails from within DVA
A. DVA staff are allowed to acknowledge diversity.
- Q. There is extreme difficulty in getting O/T support in regional areas for veterans as providers are getting higher payments from NDIS.
A. Agreed. Suggested ringing DVA which might be able to identify a suitable service. DVA is looking at its payment structure for medical service providers.
- Q. It is difficult to get home care services in regional and remote areas as DVA will not pay for travelling expenses for these providers.
Why can't veterans get NDIS equivalents?
Home Care providers are of poor quality and seem to be overcharging DVA.
A. Agreed taken on notice and advise.
- Q. If TPI is no longer available under the harmonised Act will nursing homes be able to access SRDP funds? Will SRDP be offset against other income where TPI is not.
A. Agreed t taken on notice and advise.
- Q. Delegates are by-passing advocates/ appointed representatives and going directly to clients.
A. Disappointing to hear but agreed t taken on notice for follow-up and advise.

FOLLOWING IS THE UPDATE AND FURTHER UPDATE FROM VICTORIA BENZ ON QUESTIONS RAISED AT THE CONFERENCE

NSW SUB BRANCH CONFERENCE UPDATE FROM THE DEPUTY COMMISSION, VICTORIA BENZ ON QUESTIONS AND ISSUES RAISED – 20th April 2023

Thanks again for the chance to come and speak with members at the VPPAA Conference on 16 March. It was great to hear directly from your members as to some of the issues and concerns they have, and to provide an update on activities underway in DVA.

I apologise for the time it's taken to come back to you on some of the matter raised in the meeting. I've summarised these under headings below, but also please let me know if there are any individual or specific matters that we need to look into.

Transport team are apparently declining claims for a veteran to go to their treating psychiatrist, because there is a closer psychiatrist. Transport Brisbane apparently say they google your area code, to see how many psychiatrists in that area, they don't contact in the first place.

Response: If a client is travelling away from their Closest Practical Provider (CPP), the Transport team will ask for a provider letter explaining the clinical reasons they are travelling away from their CPP. If clients place notes in their claims, it assists the Transport team in understanding why the client is travelling away from their CCP. Transport team will follow up with the veteran or the provider if they require further information or. Transport team do search for providers based on the client's location of residence, and they look for providers that offer the same services. Feedback has been provided to the Transport team to ensure they contact veterans for further information before processing transport claims.

Delegates are calling clients directly rather than speaking to their nominated representative

Response: Delegates may contact clients directly in circumstances where authorised representatives are not available, contactable, or responsive to departmental communications. We welcome any specific examples of this occurring, so we can review and provide feedback to staff where necessary, as well as ensure departmental processes are being adhered to.

Why is it so hard for reservists to have their service recognised?

Response: The DC Office is not aware of any specific issues with reservists having their service recognised. If you have information on specific instances of this happening, please send through the relevant details.

Regarding assistance dogs, is there anything being done for people with dogs through other systems or a dog through no system? A veteran in Eden requires short haired dog.

Response: DVA provides guide, hearing, mobility and psychiatric assistance dogs to eligible veterans to assist in managing their war caused injury or disease. DVA is unable to train existing pets or provide reimbursement for expenses outside of its programs. If you have further information about the specific veteran in Eden we can ask the relevant business area to contact them.

Ex-army looking for medical information? Defence will have the docs directly. Victoria to share email address for defence for medical evidence

Response: As part of the response to recommendations 9, 10, 12 and 13 of the Royal Commission Interim Report, the DVA and the Department of Defence has established a single entry point for veterans and families to obtain access to information held. The Information Access Unit (IAU) will change the way requests for personal records and information are managed and will support applicants to access information in a streamlined, consistent and trauma-informed way. The IAU is for current and ex-serving ADF members, families and representatives to request information from Defence.

You can read the administrative release and redaction guidelines on DVA's website. The new education material is also located on DVA's website. To contact DVA's Information Access Unit, you can phone 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372) or email Information.Access@dva.gov.au The Defence IAU can be contacted on this link: [Accessing information I About I Defence](#)

FURTHER UPDATE FROM THE DEPUTY COMMISSION, VICTORIA BENZ

Thank you for your patience as I have followed up on the remaining matters from the Conference.

Status Update on the Veteran Family Package

The Defence, Veterans' and Families' Acute Support Package's legislation passed Parliament on 28 September 2022, and received royal assent last week. It will come into effect from Friday 14 October 2022. The Defence, Veterans' and Families' Acute Support Package will enhance the existing program by expanding services available to families in times of crisis and allowing families greater choice in how they use those services. More information, including eligibility and services, is available on our website: [Defence, Veterans' and Families' Acute Support Package I Department of Veterans' Affairs \(dva.gov.au\)](#)

Fee Schedule Arrangements

DVA fee schedule arrangements are designed to facilitate funding of health services through a nationally consistent framework to meets the needs of veterans across the country. In general, DVA pays a higher rate than the equivalent Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) fee and doctors are not permitted to charge the patient a gap fee. The exact rate will vary depending on the service provided; for example, DVA pays 115% of the MBS fee for GP consultations. DVA provider fees are also indexed annually on 1 July using the Wage Cost Index (WCI5).

DVA actively monitors access to health services and how this might be impacted by a range of factors, including workforce shortages and the level of fees paid to providers. In circumstances where the DVA fees do not meet the clinical needs of a veteran, providers can make a request for a higher fee to be paid through DVA's prior approval arrangements. Further information is available at: www.dva.gov.au/providers/notes-fee-schedules-and-guidelines/when-we-must-approve-care

DVA is aware that some health care providers either do not have capacity to take on more patients, or have indicated they are unwilling to accept DVA payment rates. Changes to DVA provider fees and their indexation factor may be considered in the future. However, any change to DVA funding arrangements is a decision for Government which would need to be considered through a Budget process in the context of the Government's broader fiscal priorities.

I hope this covers all the questions from the day, but please do get in touch if you or your members have any other questions.

Regards,
Victoria Benz

Right - This conceptual drawing dated 21 May 2003 shows the new Virginia-class attack submarine now under construction at General Dynamics Electric Boat in Groton, Conn, and Northrop Grumman Newport News Shipbuilding in Newport News, Va. The first ship of this class, *Virginia (SSN-774)* was scheduled to be delivered to the U.S. Navy in 2004



Left -The USS Asheville, a nuclear-powered fast attack submarine currently in service, at HMAS Stirling, Western Australia on 14 March 2023. Photograph: Richard Wainwright/AAP



Above - - US nuclear submarine: Aukus will be the first time a provision in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty regime has been used to transfer naval nuclear propulsion technology from a nuclear weapons state to a non-weapons state. Photograph: Paul Hennessy/SOPA Images/REX

The *Virginia* class (above left), also known as the **SSN-774 class**, is a class of nuclear-powered cruise missile fast-attack submarines, in service in the United States Navy. Designed by General Dynamics Electric Boat (EB) and Huntington Ingalls Industries, the *Virginia* class is the United States Navy's latest submarine model, which incorporates the latest in stealth, intelligence gathering, and weapons systems technology.

Virginia-class submarines are designed for a broad spectrum of open-ocean and littoral missions, including anti-submarine warfare and intelligence gathering operations. They are scheduled to replace older *Los Angeles*-class submarines, many of which have already been decommissioned. *Virginia*-class submarines will be acquired through 2043, and are expected to remain in service until at least 2060, with later submarines expected to remain into the 2070s.

In March 2023, AUKUS announced that the Royal Australian Navy would purchase three *Virginia*-class submarines as a stopgap measure between the retirement of their conventionally powered *Collins*-class submarines and the acquisition of the future SSN-AUKUS class submarines, and if the SSN-AUKUS build schedule falls behind, has an option of purchasing two additional *Virginia*-class submarines.

Sources - news.navy.mil and Wikipedia; navsource.org; The Guardian guardian.com - Photos (where listed) as shown with image

The AUKUS Submarine from an Australian Strategic Viewpoint - By Josh Phillips

In September 2021, Australia cancelled a \$66 billion deal with the government of France to acquire a dozen new 'Shortfin Barracuda' diesel-electric submarines and, instead, finalized a replacement within the agreement known as the Australia, United Kingdom, United States pact - the AUKUS agreement. In this deal, the U.S. and the U.K. are to build and deliver eight new Virginia-class nuclear-powered subs to the Royal Australian Navy.

This has many implications, but one factor in Australia's decision to acquire nuclear submarines is their superior range, and the Lombok Strait in Indonesia is one area in which this range matters. Lombok is the only strait between the Indian and Pacific Oceans that is deep enough for submarine transit, and is a narrow strait that future RAN nuclear submarines would be able to monitor more effectively. Australia acquiring nuclear subs could allow RAN to project naval power in a more sustainable fashion.

Nuclear submarines are an asset that increases in value over time. They are powered by reactors that do not need to be refuelled for decades. They possess a substantial range, have quieter engines, and can remain submerged for up to *three months*.

Diesel submarines do not offer the same longevity. If launched from Australia's primary submarine base in Perth, it would take a deployment of diesel-powered Shortfin Barracudas around three to four days to reach the Lombok Strait at top speed, only giving the force a maximum of two weeks of effective patrol time before needing to surface. If Lombok is to be an area of interest for the RAN, then longer deployments are needed, and nuclear submarines offer operational superiority. Australia, given its national security objectives and the state of the Indo-Pacific, can most certainly fulfil more strategic aims with nuclear-powered Virginia-class submarines.

Additionally, Australia is currently upgrading their northernmost submarine facility, the HMAS Coonawarra base in Darwin, which could extend RAN's northern reach even further. The base is currently undergoing a four-year, \$200-million refit and capability enhancement.

This port investment certainly gains greater importance in light of AUKUS, as the location of this facility would serve nuclear submarine range. Yet, having the ability to launch these future RAN nuclear submarines from a location so close to Lombok would ease the scale of deployment and better positioning RAN forces overall.

Australia's desire to extend their Indo-Pacific reach is clear. In their 2020 Defence Strategic Update, the Australian government decided that defence planning will almost solely focus on regions ranging from the north-eastern Indian Ocean, through maritime and mainland South East Asia to Papua New Guinea and the South West Pacific. Among the long-standing priorities in Australia's defence strategy are denying the use of the sea to a potential adversary. Scott Morrison, former Prime Minister of Australia, cited growing security challenges in the region as one of the drivers of the new AUKUS partnership. Euan Graham of the International Institute for Strategic Studies says the submarine switch "underlines the seismic change to Australia's security environment" that has occurred since the submarine contract was agreed with France in 2016. While still somewhat unlikely, the prospect of high-intensity military conflict in the Indo-Pacific is less remote than at the time of the 2016 Defence White Paper, which Australia has noted repeatedly in their 2020 Defence Strategic Update.

Given Australia's interest in the overlapping areas of the Indian and Pacific Oceans, the monitoring of Lombok is a likely priority for RAN. At its narrowest point, Lombok is only 12 miles wide, providing Australia a variety of naval options for its assets to sustain their monitoring. In the case of heightened regional tensions, Australia could use its nuclear submarines for sea denial and even deploy submarines further than its near seas.

It's clear that alongside other purposes, an Australian nuclear submarine force will serve as a robust projection of power in the waters around Australia and possibly beyond. Australia would have the potential ability to deploy submarines from the upgraded base in Darwin. This would provide Australia an unprecedented ability to patrol northern waters for extended lengths of time, much longer than a fleet of Shortfin Barracudas would facilitate. The AUKUS deal provides a nuclear-fuelled submarine fleet to Australia that serves both its interests and that of Australia's allies and partners. The uses of this submarine fleet are many, but a look to the Lombok Strait reveals one logical focal point for RAN nuclear submarines.

Sources - Article - Josh Phillips, Small Wars Journal

REMOUNT - the original relationship between military and horse

Brief History

The First Remount Service had been formed in Melbourne on 21 September 1915 and was stationed at Maribyrnong. Members were also from Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania. Members of the Remount Service were usually older men, some having served in the Boer War. Maximum age for the unit was 50. The unit was based in Egypt but in 1917 remounts were taken to Palestine for the Palestine campaign. Members of the Remount Service looked after, and trained, the horses acquired to be used by the army before they were sent overseas and also while the horses were overseas.

Poet Andrew (Banjo) Patterson served as a Lieutenant with the 2nd Remount Squadron. Australia supplied 110,000 horses, with only one going home due to strict quarantine laws. Horses were lost at an alarming rate during the 4 years of the war. British Commonwealth Forces lost about 550,000 animals in France and Palestine. The continued resupply of horses was a major issue of the war. One estimate puts the number of horses that served during World War I (all nations) at around six million, with a large percentage of them dying due to war-related causes.

Between 1914 and 1918 Britain's war effort was dependent on its horses. At the start of the war, horse power was still a key method of moving the army and its supplies to destinations across Europe. The volume of military stores and rations required at the front was much greater than it had been in earlier conflicts. Even though the importance of the cavalry was in decline and motorised transport was becoming more reliable, trench warfare meant that provisions had to be brought in from a distance and very often over ground that wasn't suitable for other means of transport. There was an urgent demand for large numbers of draught and packhorses, mules and other animals.

The Army Remount Department was the body responsible for the purchase and training of horses and mules between 1887 and 1942. Prior to the First World War the British army possessed around 25,000 horses; by the middle of 1917 this had increased to around 600,000, plus camels and oxen.

In 1911, as the prospect of a war in Europe war loomed, the Remount Department and the police conducted an inventory of horses, to enable them to select around 130,000 animals which could be called up in an emergency it was possible to requisition horses when needed, 'on payment of a fair price and subject to the owner's right of appeal to the County Court'.

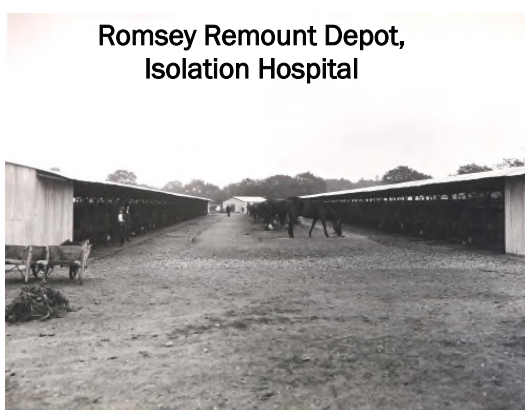
The Remount Statement of 1913-1914 gave the army's detailed requirements regarding the numbers of horses required on mobilisation, for each command and for the individual units mobilising under its orders. A committee appointed by Lord Selbourne was set up to consider and advise on what steps should be taken in England and Wales to secure an adequate supply of horses suitable for military purposes.

The committee's report of 1915 found the situation to be extremely poor. It made many criticisms, including a statement that sires were inferior:

'these horses are of so poor a stamp as to be of no military value. No one who goes carefully through the horses in either a country or urban district can fail to be appalled at the number of animals which by faulty conformation or obvious unsoundness, are quite unsuited for hard work.'

The board recommended a number of changes to ensure the future quality of horse breeding, including:

- the registration of stallions and an award of premiums to thoroughbreds
- a brood mare scheme
- the purchase of stallions by the Board
- the encouragement of breeding
- a census of horses
- the appointment of an Advisory Council and County Committees to carry out this work, together with adequate finance



**Romsey Remount Depot,
Isolation Hospital**

The National Stud grew from these changes instigated by the Selbourne Committee.

Over the course of the war, some 470,000 horses were purchased in the UK, with the large haulage companies and the railways being among the major suppliers. Around 422,000 horses and 275,000 mules came from North America, 6000 horses and 1,500 mules from South America and 3,700 mules from Spain and Portugal. Between 1914 and 1920, the Remount Service had spend £67.5 million on the purchase, training and delivery to the front of these animals.

REMOUNT - the original relationship between military and horse

Setting up camps

In order to handle the large numbers of animals, camps were set up across the country, with four main camps serving the most important ports. The first of these was on the outskirts of Romsey, serving Southampton; as did Swaythling, situated on the north side of the port. Ormskirk served Liverpool and Shirehampton served Avonmouth.

The Romsey, Ormskirk and Shirehampton camps were used for horses and mules arriving from overseas; Swaythling was a collection centre for animals being shipped abroad. Several other smaller depots were established throughout the country for the receipt of locally-bred horses.

The capacity and complement of each depot increased dramatically from their establishment. At Swaythling, for example, in April 1919, around 3,500 horses and mules were stabled and cared for by 757 men.

The camp at Swaythling collected animals from smaller camps all over England and shipped them to France; it was also one of the centres where horses were given a final overhaul before being sent to war. They also received returning animals at the end of the war. Alongside this, Swaythling trained thousands of men to be sent to look after the horses overseas.

Romsey camp received its first horses – just 20 – in March 1915. By the end of the war it had processed about 120,000, around 10% of the animals acquired by the Remount Service. Its primary function was to train horses and mules for war service, and by 1916 there were over 2,000 men stationed at this camp. They were divided into squadrons, with each containing ‘rough riders’ to break in young horses, a farrier sergeant, shoeing smiths and saddlers.

As the war progressed it became increasingly difficult to find suitable men for these trades. Many men previously considered to be too old or unfit were medically upgraded as ‘fit to fight at the front’. Members of the Woman’s Land Army were bought in to work in their place. The recruitment and organisation of women who could be enrolled for work, and particularly for situations like this, became of national importance.

There were often more than 4,000 horses and mules in the care of the squadrons at Romsey. Sometimes as many as 830 horses might be received in a day. The general length of stay of each horse varied, but was usually between one and four months, either for training or recuperation. Romsey had a large isolation hospital, where sick horses could receive the best veterinary care.

The demands of the First World War far exceeded the Remount Department’s expectations. Frequent calls were made for economies in the use of horses. In November 1915 the Prime Minister H. H. Asquith reminded the army of the need for a stringent control over expenditure, saying that he thought that horses had ‘played an unexpectedly small part in this War’.

Lord Kitchener, the Secretary of State for War, ordered the appointment in 1916 of a Committee to report on ways of reducing the number of horses. Sir W Birbeck, Director of Remounts, explained:

‘the horses remain under observation in the camps, followed by training, a process which weeded out all unfit, unsuitable and infectious animals. Without this and if animals were sent directly to France, very large and expensive arrangements would have to be introduced as well as infection being introduced into the war zone.’ (CAB 24/2/50)

The Army Council commented that it was already using bicycles wherever possible and expressed its strong opposition to civil servants meddling in military matters.

The initial phase of mobilisation passed without any serious hitches. Before the war, a list of retired officers willing to help with horse mobilisation programme had been drawn up.

Once these animals had joined their units, they needed to be fed and watered, and when they fell sick or were wounded they required – and often received – a high standard of veterinary care. Horses were as indispensable to the war effort as machine guns, railways and heavy artillery: the ability to mobilise these vast numbers of animals was crucial. This work was provided by the Horse Transport Company, the largest element of The Army Service Corps (ASC); we hold their war diaries in WO 95/5460.

The contribution of animals, especially to the transport services and artillery, was of central importance. Horses pulled the divisional supply trains nearer to the front lines; they pulled makeshift sledges carrying the wounded, over mud men could barely walk over; they took ammunition to the guns, food to the field kitchens and carried mail to the soldiers. Its fair to say that without them, the British army would have suffered immeasurably.

SEE PGS 28/29 FOR REMOUNT RE-ENACTMENTS AND PGS 32/33 FOR CURRENT REMOUNT VETERAN PROGRAMS

Field Bakery



Sources - Birtwistlewiki Mediawiki;
National Archives UK 2017 by Sally Hoult ;



REMOUNT in Egypt

Left - Jack McGrath with his friend, George Gray, from Cannon Hill, Brisbane, seeing the sights of Egypt, ca. 1916. Source: John Oxley Library, Accession 30731, Item 56.



Right - Grave of Trooper William Walter Rankin (service no. 1942) of the 2nd Australian Remount Unit, in the New Protestant Cemetery, Cairo, Egypt, ca. 1916. Source: John Oxley Library, Accession 30731, item 16.



Right - Australian troops, possibly from the 2nd Remount Unit, standing in front of the Jaffa Gate, Jerusalem, ca. 1917. Source: John Oxley Library, Accession 30731/22.

REMOUNT in Egypt

Two Australian remount units were established in September 1914 to enable much-needed troops from the light horse, who had been caring for the horses in Egypt, to return to their regiments at Gallipoli. Recruits for the remount units were drawn from Boer War veterans and expert horsemen, as well as blacksmiths, saddlers, farriers and wagon drivers. The maximum age was set at 50, although each squadron included 40 rough riders who were young, fit, and experienced in dealing with difficult and dangerous horses. Many of the men had worked as drovers, stockmen, horse breakers and buck jumping riders in civilian life.

Jack McGrath, service no. 2788, was born in Brisbane in 1896 and was the youngest son of Jeremiah McGrath and Ellen, nee Thompson. He was a 21 year old horse breaker when he enlisted on the 20th Dec 1915. He embarked from Sydney on the ship "Osterley" on the 15th January 1916 and served with the Australian Remount Unit 2, Reinforcement 3, in the Middle East.

The Remount Depot was based in Egypt, first at Maadi and later at Heliopolis and then Moascar. The work was very dangerous and the men suffered many injuries, and in some cases were killed, in the course of their work with the spirited and often aggressive horses.

The collection includes a photograph of the grave of William Walter Rankin from Duaringa in Central Queensland, who was killed instantly by a kick from a horse which fractured his ribs and injured his heart on the 21st July 1916. He was buried the next day in the New Protestant Cemetery in Old Cairo with his grave and headstone erected by his officers and comrades.

In March 1916 the Two Australian Remount Units were reduced to one by reducing by half the number of men in each unit, while retaining all of the rough riders. This reduction in numbers was due to the shift in fighting to the Western Front and the subsequent demand for fewer horses. Many of the older men returned to Australia while some of the younger troopers chose to join fighting units at the front. Jack McGrath chose to remain with the remount unit as a rough rider. In a postcard to his mother, dated 18 March 1916 he writes:

Nearly all able remount men have volunteered into a fighting corp. But I am quite satisfied to remain where I am for the time being. Tell me all the news of Brisbane & how the garden and home is keeping. Remember me to all the married family and I hope we will be together next Xmas with God's help. (Accession 30731/38).

Fortunately Jack survived the war, returning to Australia in July 1919 on board the *HT Burma*. He married Bertha Minna Louise Vellnagel in 1922 and died on the 14th March 1939 in Brisbane.

We are very grateful to the family of Jack McGrath for donating this wonderful collection to the library and highlighting the achievements of these brave and daring troopers. The collection is available at the John Oxley Library (Accession 30731)

The distinguished reputation of Australian horses in the Sinai and Palestine campaigns was in no small part due to the work of the remount units, which were responsible for their training. When the Light Horse left for Gallipoli in 1915, they left behind detachments to take care of the horses. To free these men to rejoin their regiments, two remount units were formed in September 1915, each of four squadrons. The maximum age for enlistment was set at 50, and the units contained a high proportion of Boer War veterans and expert horsemen. By the time they arrived in Egypt however, the evacuation of Gallipoli was imminent. Accordingly, at the end of March 1916 the units were reduced by half, each contributing two squadrons to a single remount unit. Later in the year, the unit was further reduced to two squadrons, and became the Remount Depot. Although based in Egypt, in late 1917 the depot delivered remounts to the Palestine front by driving them across the Sinai *Overlanders*-style in order to save scarce rail transport, and so is credited with participation in the Palestine campaign.

Sources - Kent, David, *The Australian Remount Unit in Egypt, 1915-1919: A footnote to history*, Journal of the Australian War Memorial, No. 1, October 1982.

Ross Mallet - for aif.adfa.edu

Lynn Meyers, Original Materials Librarian

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The Cold War and the crisis in Korea: THE KOREAN WAR

Australia entered the Korean War on 28 September 1950, following the invasion of South Korea by North Korea. The war's origins began in the context of Japan's defeat in World War II which heralded the end to 35 years of Japanese occupation of the Korean Peninsula. The surrender of Japan to the Allied forces on 2 Sept 1945 led to the division of Korea into two countries, which were officially called the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the Republic of Korea (ROK), with the DPRK was occupied by the Soviet Union, and the ROK, below the 38th Parallel, was occupied by the United States (US).

Following failed attempts at reintegration, the North invaded the South, which caused the United Nations (UN) to call a resolution to protect the south from further aggression. The Liberal government of Australia, led by Prime Minister Robert Menzies, immediately responded to the resolution by offering military assistance. About 17,000 Australians served in Korea in between 1950 and 1953, with casualties numbering 339 dead and 1200 wounded.

The Korean War began on 25 June 1950 and ended on 27 July 1953...

North Korea invaded the south in an attempt to unify the country under the north's government. The attempt failed, and Korea is still divided in two. Both sides maintain armies along the border where there is an uneasy peace sometimes interrupted by exchanges of artillery fire.



Members of the 3rd Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment (3RAR) take in the view of Pusan harbour and lighthouse, from the deck of the US troopship Aiken Victory. From Pusan they will move on to Taegu to prepare for their first operations in the Korean War. [AWM HOB1346]

The war cost more than two million lives and ruined the economy of Korea for twenty years. It also had implications for a wider conflict, the Cold War. The main protagonists of that political, economic, military and ideological contest, the Soviet Union and the United States of America, intervened in the Korean War. The Soviet Union and its ally China backed North Korea, while the United States gathered an alliance under the auspices of the United Nations (UN) to support the south. One of the 21 UN countries offering support was Australia which sent almost 18,000 army, navy and air force personnel. These are remembered in Australia each year, especially the 340 who died, on 24 October, United Nations Day.

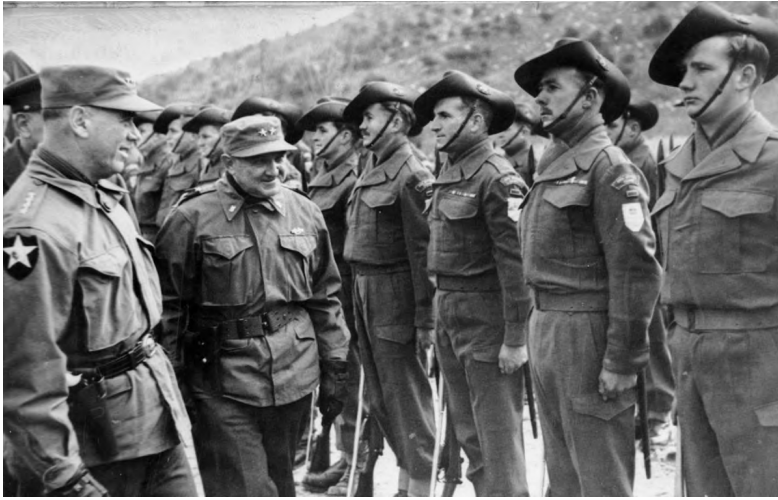
The most famous leaders of the time were closely involved with the war – two American presidents, Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower, China's Mao Zedong and the Soviet Union's Joseph Stalin. Korea was the only occasion in the Cold War when there was prolonged fighting between Chinese, Russian and American land and air forces. The fighting took place in a rugged, mountainous theatre of war.

Korea was a new kind of war. With both superpowers possessing nuclear weapons, neither side could aim for total victory as the threat of escalation to nuclear war hung over the conflict. The outcome of the Korean War determined the United States to maintain large military forces to constrain communism. The war saw the rise of China as a significant military power and it was the first time jet aircraft fought jet aircraft. For Australia, Korea was the first war of the newly formed Australian Army, the only time an aircraft carrier of the Royal Australian Navy conducted air operations in war, and the last time the Royal Australian Air Force engaged in air to air fighting.

Australian soldiers boarding troopship bound for the Korean War, 1951
(City of Sydney Archives: A-00085615)



THE KOREAN WAR



General James van Fleet, commander of the 8th US Army, inspects members of the 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment

The three-year war on the Korean peninsula was the first open conflict of the Cold War. Australia was one of 21 countries that supported South Korea against an invasion by communist North Korea. Nearly 18,000 Australian servicemen fought but they returned to an Australian public indifferent to a distant war that had ended in a difficult stalemate.

Sergeant Bill Collings, Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF):

No-one knew I was home from Korea. 'What are those medals for?' – they just didn't have a clue, really.

Causes of the Korean War

Between 1876 and 1910, through a combination of political pressure and military force Japan occupied the Korean peninsula. This began 35 years of sometimes brutal Japanese rule in Korea which ended with Japan's defeat in the Second World War.

From 1945 the country was divided into zones of occupation by the victorious American and Soviet Union armies. Various Korean groups from far right nationalists to communists claimed to speak for an independent government, but none could reach an agreement with the Soviet and American occupying forces.

In 1948 two separate governments, a communist one in the north and a republican one in the south, were formed each claiming control of the entire peninsula. Animosity between the two parties was high and a border was established along the 38th parallel.

In July 1949, with the Cold War between the west and the Soviet Union intensifying around the globe and Korea considered a low priority, the US withdrew most of its troops from the south. Russia withdrew its troops from the north around the same time.



Meanwhile, the Soviet Union-backed North Korean leader Kim Il Sung, made plans to invade the south and unify the country by force. On 25 June 1950 North Korean troops crossed the 38th parallel into South Korea. Two days later, with the Russian delegate absent and unable to veto any resolution, the United Nations Security Council in New York committed forces from willing nations to the aid of South Korea. These forces were led by the US.

At the front the troops lived in 'huchies' (pronounced 'hootches'), the Korean War equivalent to the 'dug-outs' and 'foxholes' of previous wars. At their best these shelters were warm and deep and comfortable, buttressed with stout Oregon rafters, built up with sandbags, furnished with camp stretchers and oil or wood stoves. At their worst they were miserable holes in the ground, where a man couldn't stand and was often forced to sleep in his full battle kit.

THE KOREAN WAR

Australia and the Korean War

Prime Minister Robert Menzies, though fervently anti-Communist, was not in favour of sending forces to the Korean War. However, his External Affairs Minister Sir Percy Spender recognised the importance of forging a closer relationship with the US.

Within days of the North Korean invasion in June 1950, Spender pressured the acting Prime Minister Arthur Fadden to commit Australia to the war while Menzies was overseas.

Spender realised that Britain was about to announce it would send ground forces to Korea. He judged that if the British became militarily engaged, Menzies would eventually follow suit, but Canberra would gain more credit in Washington if it made the commitment first.

Menzies, when presented with the fait accompli of Australian military action in Korea publicly proclaimed his support. Within Australia there was very little political or community opposition to involvement in the Korean War. At the time there was strong anti-communist feeling in Australia as shown by Petrov affair and the Australian Labor Party split.



Left - HMAS Sydney's flight deck in a Korean snow storm

Right - Korea, 1950. Australian troops move through the wreckage of a North Korean town.



First to be sent to South Korea was the RAAF's 77 Squadron along with the frigate HMAS *Shoalhaven* and the destroyer HMAS *Bataan* – all of which were stationed in Japan at the time.

The Korean War was primarily a land war. In September 1950 the government sent the 3rd Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment (3 RAR), followed by 1 RAR and 2 RAR. Australia did not introduce conscription for the Korean War even though this commitment required almost all of Australia's regular infantry troops.

The Australian military served with distinction during the war. At the Battle of Kapyong an Australian battalion (approximately 800 soldiers) along with another from Canada defeated an entire Chinese division (approximately 15,000 men) and prevented it from taking Seoul. Both battalions were awarded US Presidential Unit Citations. Nearly 18,000 Australian soldiers, sailors, airmen and nurses served in the war.

Forgotten war

It is not known exactly how many people died in the Korean War, but an estimated four million Korean and Chinese people died. More than half were Korean civilians. About 37,000 UN troops were killed; 339 Australians died and 1216 were wounded.

Australian servicemen and women returning from Korea were largely greeted with indifference. The Australian public was unsupportive of a war that had become mired in stalemate with an enemy that posed no direct threat to Australia.

Legacy of the Korean War

Though the Korean and Vietnam wars were both direct conflicts with communism, the Korean War differs from the Vietnamese in that it did prevent the communist north's conquest of the south. The newly formed UN passed this test of its effectiveness, but only just. It was the first conflict of the Cold War, and one that could have escalated into a nuclear conflict. It also fulfilled Sir Percy Spender's intention of binding Australia more closely to the United States and this resulted in the ANZUS treaty of 1951.

THE KOREAN WAR

Living conditions

The terrain and climate made conditions in Korea difficult for Australian troops there. Almost 80 per cent of Korea is mountainous: the effort of moving even short distances over mountains and valleys was exhausting and time-consuming.

Soldiers also had to cope with extremes of temperature, with heat as well as cold. The pervading, numbing cold of the winters is well remembered by veterans. Soldiers slept with their guns to their chests, to keep the parts from freezing up. Living and fighting in this climate posed a constant struggle, creating difficulties with transport, the movement and maintenance of supplies and the soldiers' health. The Americans and British eventually issued Australian soldiers with improved protective clothing.

The heat of the Korean summers also presented problems. Flies, mites and mosquitoes and the difficulties of finding clean drinking water often plagued the troops.

(Extract from Out in the Cold, The Australian War Memorial's online exhibition on Korea)

United States involvement

When the North Koreans invaded, the South Korean army collapsed under the onslaught. The US troops hastily flown in from Japan, where they were serving as an army of occupation, provided support to the South Koreans but were driven back to the southern city of Pusan. There they formed a perimeter around the city and struggled to hold on against repeated North Korean attacks.

After six weeks the UN coalition's Supreme Commander, General Douglas MacArthur, mounted a successful amphibious landing 330 kilometres north at Inchon, just west of Seoul and very near the 38th parallel. This made it possible to retake the capital and drive back the North Koreans across the border.

However, MacArthur, supported by Washington, made the grave error of trying to take the whole of North Korea. Despite warnings from Peking, he pushed to within 50 kilometres of the Chinese border. It was then, in October 1950, that the Chinese committed huge numbers of troops to support the beleaguered North Koreans. Again, the UN forces were forced to retreat. They were driven back beyond the 38th parallel and lost Seoul. In March 1951 a fresh UN offensive retook the capital but was held back again near the old border. There both armies remained for the next two years and the war settled into a trench warfare conflict.

After protracted negotiations, mostly over the exchange of prisoners, an armistice was signed that came into effect on 27 July 1953. The war ended with the border between North and South Korea more or less where it was before 1950.



Australian National Korean War Memorial

Sources - ANZAC portal, DVA; National Museum of Australia; Australian War Museum; City of Sydney archives and Wikipedia text under CC-BY-SA license

The monument commemorates the 17000 Australians who served under United Nations command in the Korean War. The design characterises the period of the Korean War. The use of white and grey tones in the memorial, and granite and gravel, recall the harsh climate and terrain in Korea - lasting impressions of those who fought there. A central walkway leads to a semi-enclosed contemplative space. A boulder from a Korean battlefield is a commemorative focal point and a word in Korean script represents `Peace and Independence`. A scroll recognises the 21 countries that committed combat or medical units to the United Nations Command. On both sides of the memorial are figures representing the Australian sailors, soldiers and airmen who served in Korea. Battlefield boulders are set in fields of stainless steel poles which symbolise those who died. The obelisk commemorates those who died with no known grave. The inscription, taken from the United Nations Memorial Cemetery, Pusan, is a poignant link with the Australians who are buried there.

ANZAC Day Service and March in Wauchope and Port Macquarie 2023



Forming Up - after the Pipes and Drums - firstly the flag bearers, our President Mr Bill Wagner with the Vietnam Veterans wreath, veterans step off,

Below left- Vietnam Veterans at the Port Macquarie ANZAC Day March and Service, Vietnam Veterans Banner carried by Bob Holley and Duncan Smith.

Below right - Vietnam Veterans Peter Kable (L) and Peter Page (R) at Port's Dawn Service



Sources - Image above by Port News; Image left by Barry Lynch; all other images by Editor, Contact Front

ANZAC Day Service and March in Wauchope and Port Macquarie 2023



Wauchope Pipe and Drums lead the way, followed by the wreath layers, veterans, SES and CFA, Guides and Scouts and several school groups



Fly by - first a local pilot in his own plane then the ADF plane flies low - below and bottom - Vietnam Veterans wreath



China's Ferry Tale Taiwan Invasion Plan Is A Legal Nightmare

Last Friday, reports emerged that U.S. Air Force General Michael Minihan penned a memo to his command predicting that China would invade Taiwan in 2025. Analysts have repeatedly cited China's lack of capacity for amphibious assault as evidence that it will not be ready for war so quickly. China's recent military exercises, however, suggest that it has plans to fix this capacity gap—in a way that could have disastrous consequences for civilian life. China's use of civilian ferries in military exercises blurs the legal distinction between civilian and military assets that makes it difficult to predict when, and if, China will invade Taiwan. It also erodes the core principles of the law of war.

China's use of civilian ships to advance its military aims is central to its military strategy. Outside of armed conflict, China has used its maritime militia to advance its illegal maritime claims in the South and East Chinas seas. China is also using civilian Roll-On, Roll-Off car ferries ("RO-ROs") in amphibious assault rehearsals, signifying that it plans to use them on the front lines during armed conflict. RO-ROs were initially invented by the British Navy after the emergency evacuation of Dunkirk. To speed the loading of vehicles, they placed a retractable ramp on a cargo ship's bow and/or stern, an idea soon adopted by civilian ferry operators.

Military amphibious assault ships can open their ramps at sea, allowing small boats, landing craft, swimming tanks, and more to enter and exit the ship. Most civilian ferries do not have this capacity. However, China's 2016 National Defense Transportation Law obligates transport companies to support People's Liberation Army (PLA) operations and requires civilian RO-ROs to be built to military standards. The PLA has plans to use RO-ROs in or before conflict to launch vehicles, deliver forces, emplace mines, and engage in reconnaissance and deception.

In 2022, 30 different commercial RO-ROs participated in large-scale lift exercises involving PLA troops. The PLA has engaged in significant camouflage, concealment, and deception to disguise the use of the RO-ROs. A satellite photo from August 31, 2022 shows a 15,000 ton general purpose cargo RO-RO with its ramp in the water and several swimming tanks behind it, more than 1500 kilometers from its regular route, with a row of amphibious armored vehicles standing ready on a nearby beach. By one analyst's calculation, the seven private Bohai Ferry Group ships participating in this exercise could have delivered 10,000 personnel and more than 80 percent of a PLA heavy brigade's equipment.

The law of war applies only during armed conflict. However, China cannot be excused for eroding the principles of the law of war in peacetime. The exact moment when armed conflict begins, or when ships become legitimate military targets, is rarely clear. RO-ROs can be quickly diverted for military use, and may become targetable based on their nature, purpose, and use. Although the ships are currently operating outside of armed conflict, their use in exercises portends their use during armed conflict, which could occur on short notice.



Left - China's drills near Taiwan a 'war-like' escalation from exercises last year. Biggest show of force since August was more targeted and showed intent to annex island, say analysts. China's three-day military drills around Taiwan involved 13 different types of aircraft, including five models of fighter jets.

Photograph: Xinhua/Wang Zixiao/EPA; The Guardian, April 23

Right - China has stepped up military activities around Taiwan, including almost daily air force incursions into the island's air defence identification zone [File: Ng Han Guan/AP Photo]; Al Jazeera news March 2023

China's Ferry Tale Taiwan Invasion Plan Is A Legal Nightmare

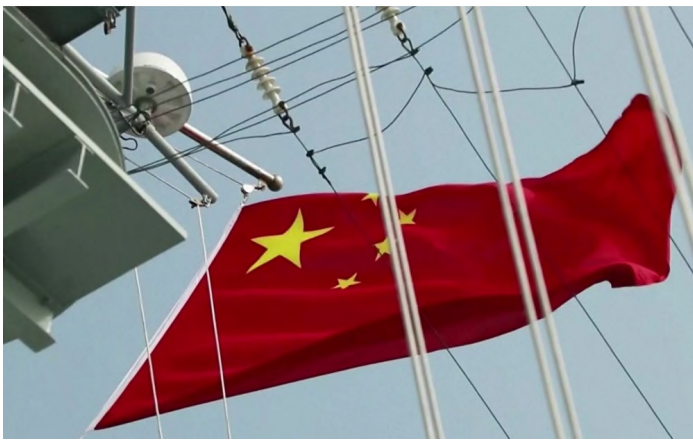
Using civilian vessels for military purposes is part of China's strategy of lawfare—exploiting the law-abidingness of its adversaries. Using civilian RO-ROs blurs the principle of distinction between combatants and civilians, and between military and civilian objects, that is core to the law of war. During armed conflict, China would be legally responsible for ensuring that military assets are distinct from civilian ones, physically separating military objects from the civilian population and civilian objects whenever possible. To date, the PLA has not distinguished the RO-ROs from civilian vessels by applying PLA markings, gray paint, or other visual distinctions. By refusing to distinguish military from civilian vessels, China erodes the principle of distinction so that parties cannot easily apply it. In doing so, China puts civilians at greater risk of suffering if war arrives.

By blurring the line between civilian and military assets, and giving this “civil-military fusion” legitimacy under its domestic laws and regulations, China is eroding the law of war in a way that increases the likelihood of civilian harm during armed conflict. During armed conflict, parties may legally target civilian vessels used for military purposes or under the direct control of an adversary force. The law of war also permits targeting civilians who are directly participating in hostilities. However, during armed conflict, the U.S. or Taiwan might be uncertain whether a ship is employed for civilian or military use, and may hesitate before attacking a civilian vessel. Legally, China would be responsible for placing innocent civilians or civilian property on board at risk. However, China's use of RO-ROs could give it a false pretext for claiming the U.S. unlawfully attacked a civilian ship.

While Minihan's prediction may not be true, China's use of civilian ferries could allow it to invade Taiwan sooner than previously thought. Ferry fleets could convey troop formations directly to Taiwan, with relatively little warning. By augmenting its military fleet with civilian vessels, China makes it difficult to estimate its true military capacity—and to predict an invasion.

The U.S. must act now to create rules of engagement to ensure readiness if China invades Taiwan. The U.S. must determine now when civilian RO-ROs would be considered valid military objectives in the event of an imminent invasion. The RO-ROs likely would be surrounded by hundreds of escort ships and decoy vessels, further complicating rules of engagement.

The U.S. must also work to expose how China uses civilian vessels for military purposes. Illuminating China's lawfare can help pressure China to stop undermining the law of war. It might pressure investors, clients, or insurers not to support the private ferry companies used by the PLA. It can also inoculate the U.S. and Taiwan against false accusations of civilian harm, reduce risk of civilian harm in the event of armed conflict, and preserve fundamental principles of the law of war.



Left above - China's military is rehearsing the encirclement of Taiwan during three days - BBC news
Right - YANTAI, CHINA - APRIL 13, 2022 - A container truck carrying anti-epidemic supplies to Shanghai - Forbes Business

Source - Article - Jill Goldenziel, Professor at the U.S. National Defense University-College of Information and Cyberspace and a consultant on Business; Forbes Business, Jan 2023. Photos as listed



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**From unwanted station horse to Anzac Day educator
— the story of Mick Batchelor's Deets**



Mick Batchelor rescued Deets from the knackery after a chance encounter.

Mick Batchelor was travelling through the outback a few years back when he chanced upon a truckload of horses at a rodeo at Tibooburra in Far West New South Wales.

Mick Batchelor bought Deets after a chance meeting in the outback. Deets was discovered to be a Waler, a type of wartime horse and he will play a part in the upcoming Cobar Anzac Day parade. Mr Batchelor, a stock contractor, naturally took a closer look. To his surprise, he learned that they had come from Naryilco Station in Queensland's Channel Country.

And, to his horror, that they were on route to a knackery in South Australia. "They were all work horses and hadn't been used for a while and had been out on a river paddock in a real big drought year of 2017," he said.

Cattle company S Kidman & Co. had recently sold the station to Gina Reinhart's Hancock Agriculture and was getting rid of excess horses.

Among them was a broadly built, 10-year-old, dark bay gelding, standing 16 hands, by the name of Deets, that caught Mr Batchelor's eye. The rodeo proprietor tested the horses for their bucking ability, to see if any might find a new career in the rodeo ring. Deets barely raised an eyebrow let alone a ruckus.



Mick Batchelor met the Waler horse by chance.

Ideal for a packhorse, thought Mr Batchelor. As luck would have it, he met local horse breaker Timmy Norris. Years earlier, Mr Norris had broken Deets in and confirmed his placid temperament. Deets also had an illustrious lineage. He was a Waler, the type of horse whose wartime deeds had won worldwide acclaim, especially in the blazing deserts of the Middle East during World War I.

Back then, Sir Sidney Kidman — "Australia's Cattle King" — supplied thousands of horses to the Australian Army; from officers' chargers to sturdy general riding horses, as used by the Australian Light Horse as well as heavier, haulage horses like Deets.

From unwanted station horse to Anzac Day educator — the story of Mick Batchelor's Deets

"Well, he's wide enough on the rump you could sit around him and play a game of cards I reckon," Mr Batchelor said.

"Horses had such an integral role in warfare," historian Rachel Caines of the Australian War Memorial explained. "They were used to pull the ambulances, to bring the artillery to and from the field, to help bring the wounded, to help transport supplies."

So, for \$200 and a bit of paperwork, Mick Batchelor bought Deets and found homes for the other 25 horses on the truck.

Horses and Anzac Day

Now the large dark bay has an integral role as a ceremonial troop horse.

A stalwart supporter of the Riverina Light Horse, Mr Batchelor — dressed in the authentic uniform and kit of a light horseman — is kept busy parading his horses at commemorative events across the country.

This Anzac Day, mounted on his chestnut gelding, Wallace, he'll attend the unveiling of the new war memorial at Cobar, in New South Wales.

The presence of horses at such events seems to strike an evocative chord with everyone.

"When they see the horses, the people just flock [to you] and want to look and ask questions. It seems to be a tradition that has grown on the public. They want to know more," Chris Walsh of Narromine said.



Left - Mick Batchelor will bring horses Wallace and Deets to the Anzac Day parade. Right - Riverina Light Horse practise a number of cavalry drills such as tent pegging

Mr Walsh has been a volunteer light horse drill instructor for several decades, motivated by a desire to remember the wartime sacrifice of humans and animals.

"A lot of horses came from the country areas, and so on, and they were part of families and working stations and they never came back," Mr Walsh said.

"So we've gotta remember them too: the horses, their sacrifice, both on the Western Front and the Middle East." The hardiness and endurance of Waler horses in Palestine and Sinai in World War I became legendary.

Mr Batchelor said this was largely because most had been bred in the harsh Australian outback.

"So, those horses could stand up to a bigger day — less water and less feed — than the European horses," he said.

However, it's often overlooked that the majority of the horses Australia sent to the war — somewhere between 130,000 and 160,000 — served on the killing fields of France and Belgium.

"Most of them were dealing with gas, shell explosions. The mud is often commented on and a really important part of horses' experience at war, I think," Ms Caines said.

The average life expectancy for a heavy horse such as Deets on the Western Front in World War I was six weeks.

As for Deets, he's in good company at Grong Grong in New South Wales. He shares a paddock with a mule and a donkey that Mr Batchelor also sourced from the outback.

Mules and donkeys were also pressed into wartime service and became part of an estimated eight million horses, mules and donkeys that were killed during World War I. Most perished from the extreme conditions they endured.

"We're trying to preserve the history," said Mr Batchelor, who said animals have a crucial role in modern-day remembrance. And I think that's a better way to educate people, rather than walking into an old museum.

They can come and see it, smell it, feel it."

Source - ABC Landline by Tim Lee 2023

Remount program gets defence veterans back on the horse to adapt to post-military life

YASS farmer Ben Maguire began the not-for-profit Remount program for defence veterans (in 2017) to help them rediscover their civilian identities by learning how to ride, muster cattle and find their own peace. Standing around a campfire on a Winter's night in southern NSW, army veterans Shane Van Duren and Alex Hill feel right at home.

They have a roast dinner in their bellies, tea in their hands and are looking forward to a long sleep in a warm bed. It has not always been this comfortable, however.

After some time staring at the coals, Mr Van Duren opened up about his time in East Timor as part of Operations Spitfire, Warden and Stabilise. As a soldier attached to the Third Battalion Royal Australian Regiment in 1999 and 2000, he witnessed some heinous things.



Left - The Remount program aims to teach Australian Defence Force personnel suffering from PTSD. Right - Shane Van Duren and Alex Hill both served in the Australian Defence Force
Pictures: Dylan Robinson

"By the time we got to distributing aid there were women handing us dead babies because they had no milk," the 42-year-old said. "People starved very quickly."

He spoke of being confronted with decapitated heads on stakes. And of his time in the French Foreign Legion, when he held the cracked skull of a fellow soldier after he was pushed off the back of a truck. He died soon after.

"When we came back from Timor we felt like we had come back to a foreign country," Mr Van Duren, a father of three who has been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, said.

He lived in a park in Germany for two months after discharge.

"You come back and it's like you have burnt out your adrenal gland. I have not adjusted that well."

Former lance corporal Alex Hill, who served in Afghanistan for eight months, said having fellow soldiers be carried away in coffins, mixed with the constant fear of being killed by supposed allies in the Afghan National Army, was incredibly stressful, and returning home carrying those experiences alienating.

"When you talk to people about it they are very ignorant of what is happening elsewhere," the 27-year-old, who doesn't suffer PTSD, said.

"They (civilians) know what happened over there but they don't really know — if that makes sense. When Private Matt Lambert died (killed by an IED) in 2011 it hit the whole group pretty hard.

"It doesn't really hit home until you come back from deployment or doing the ceremonies. When you're over you just put it in the back of your head."



Left - They're taught how to work with horses as well as talking around a campfire over supper.

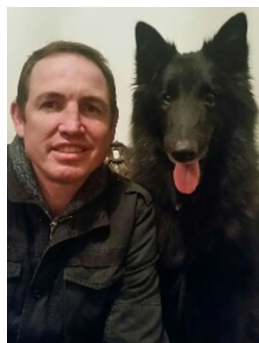
Right - cooking up a feast for breakfast

Pictures: Dylan Robinson



Remount program gets defence veterans back on the horse to adapt to post-military life

Mr Hill and Mr Van Duren are two of three veterans who attended the Remount program last weekend in Yass, north of Canberra. The other veteran, Sean*, was too -disturbed to talk publicly. Also there in the rolling hills was Janny Poate. Her son, Private Robert Poate, was killed by an Afghan National Army soldier gone rogue in August 2012. She said she was honouring her son's legacy and trying to help soldiers like Robert. The free program was started in July last year by cattle farmer Ben Maguire, who lives on a 121ha farm with his wife Marina and 12-year-old daughter Harriette. "Many join up to the defence forces because they are adrenaline junkies and we are giving them that risk without someone trying to shoot their head off," Mr Maguire, also the CEO of the Australian Trucking Association, said. "We teach them the basics but by the end of the second day they are working cattle and challenging themselves in ways they never thought possible."



Left - The veterans learn how to ride a horse then muster 300-head of cattle on a neighbouring 202ha property ,
Centre - Van Duren, with his dog Kalu. He served with the ADF and French Foreign Legion
Right - Former lance corporal Alex Hill, 27, served in Afghanistan in 2011
Pictures supplied

Veterans who attend the not-for-profit program don't get any psychological treatment. Rather, they are supported by volunteers who cook, teach them how to ride and make leather goods, as well as offering a friendly ear. "When they leave the -military they are disconnected from their whole life, the support network, their identity," former Royal Air Force nurse and Remount volunteer Karen Williams said. "There is a cultural divide between military and civilians and we want to bridge that gap. We really want to engage the people who slip through the cracks of the system." Many veterans do end up falling through the cracks A National Mental Health Commission report released in March found the suicide rate for full-time men in the defence forces is 53 per cent lower than the general male population. When they are discharged, however, the rate of suicide is then 13 per cent above the national average. "Because veterans don't make a song and dance about it, and because they are good at shaving out of a cup, they just end up on the street," Mr Van Duren said. "Coming here, it is not equine therapy where you are treated like some leper which has to be treated by an animal to make you feel better," he said. "There is that connection that you have to build with the animal, but it is more of a professional bond. "It has been a long time since I have had a professional relationship with anything." **Not his real name*



Left - Stockman Richard Miller helps Hill make a leather belt
Right - There is a cultural divide between military and civilians
Pictures: Dylan Robinson



Source - by Ben Pike, Sunday Telegraph



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SS Montevideo Maru, found - decades after she sank with about 979 Australian troops and civilians on board.

A research team has discovered the SS Montevideo Maru, decades after sank with about 979 Australian troops and civilians on board.

The ship at the centre of the worst maritime disaster in Australia's history has been discovered more than 4,000 metres beneath the sea, 81 years after it sank.

- Montevideo Maru was torpedoed by a US submarine, which did not know it was carrying prisoners of war and civilians
 - The wreck was found after almost two weeks of searching in the South China Sea
- It will not be disturbed and no remains will be taken

Japanese transport ship SS Montevideo Maru sank with about 979 Australian troops and civilians on July 1, 1942, off the coast of the Philippines. It was torpedoed by an American submarine, which did not know it was carrying prisoners of war and civilians captured in Rabaul. In total, about 1,060 prisoners were lost, including 850 service members and 210 civilians from 14 countries. The location of the wreck has remained a mystery for decades — until now. SS Montevideo Maru was found after 12 days of searching in the South China Sea, by a team led by not-for-profit Silentworld Foundation, deep-sea survey specialists Fugro and supported by the Department of Defence.

The Montevideo Maru was sunk by an American submarine off the coast of the Philippine island of Luzon. The wreckage will not be disturbed, and no human remains or artefacts will be removed. The site, which sits deeper than the wreck of the Titanic, will be recorded for research purposes. Features found on scans of the wreckage, including the hold, the foremast, and the curve of the bow, match those found on drawings of the Montevideo Maru. Silentworld Foundation director John Mullens told ABC News Breakfast there were mixed emotions on board the ship when the discovery was made. "We're looking at the gravesite of over 1,000 people," he said.

John Mullens spoke to the ABC shortly after the discovery was announced. "We lost nearly twice as many [Australians] as in the whole of the Vietnam War, so it's extraordinarily significant for families and descendants. "[The significance] is a mixture of the technical challenge, which is absorbing and motivating ... but on the other side of it is the human side. "When we first saw the images coming up of the ship no-one had seen for 80 years, since that terrible night, it was pretty emotional stuff. "We had two people on board who had family members who were lost, so while on the one side there were cheers, on the other there were a few tears. It was very emotional." Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said he hoped the discovery would bring "a measure of comfort" to the families of the victims. "The extraordinary effort behind this discovery speaks for the enduring truth of Australia's solemn national promise to always remember and honour those who served our country," he said. "This is the heart and the spirit of Lest We Forget."



Left - A research team has discovered the SS Montevideo Maru, decades after sank with about 979 Australian troops and civilians on board. Right - The Montevideo Maru was sunk by an American submarine off the coast of the Philippine island of Luzon

SS Montevideo Maru, found - decades after she sank with about 979 Australian troops and civilians on board.

'Hugely emotional' moment for families - The discovery has come as a form of closure for families, including Noosa woman Cathy Parry-McLennan, whose grandfather Arthur Parry was a radiologist on the ship when it went down. She said her grandmother and her father, just 13 years old when Dr Parry went missing, waited years to find out what happened. "[My grandmother] was evacuated with my father and his siblings to Sydney, and then she was told on October 30, 1945," she said.

"I just remember my father telling me for years they didn't know what had happened to him. "They knew he'd been in New Guinea, he writes them letters ... there'd been stories he'd been beheaded, that he might still be in hiding, and then they got the telegram. It's a lovely thing to have received this and know that he's been found." For her father, Colwyn Parry, there had always been a "great sense of loss but a great love as well" for his missing father, Ms Parry-McLennan said. "My father was so proud of him," she said. "He always talked about his father as being loving, as being a bit of a jokester."

Dr Parry had been working in Papua New Guinea for the local health department, and was not allowed to return to Australia when the war broke out, instead staying on as the only doctor in Rabaul and Kokopo. He declined evacuation when the situation grew more serious, according to a 1958 article retelling the story of the Japanese Army's arrival in Rabaul.

"[A Kokopo plantationer said], 'The situation is grim, would you like to come with us? Do you have any other escape avenues?'" read the article, which was saved by Colwyn Parry and passed on to his daughter after his death six years ago. "Arthur Parry shook his head and said, 'I cannot go. There are 200 boys in this hospital and I must stay and do what I must to look after them.'"

Other families lost multiple members of their family, including the Turners of NSW, whose three young sons Sidney, Dudley and Daryl all enlisted together in Australia's first commando group.



Top left - These members of the Anti Aircraft Battery Rabaul, gunner Thomas Gordon, bombardier Francis James Heriot and gunner Peter Biden, were among the POWs taken on board the ship. (Supplied: Australian War Memorial)
Right - Radiologist Arthur Parry went down with the ship.(Supplied)
Bottom left - All three Turner brothers enlisted together and perished together on the Montevideo Maru. (Supplied)

SS Montevideo Maru, found - decades after she sank with about 979 Australian troops and civilians on board.

On board the search vessel when the wreck was discovered was Andrea Williams, who lost both her grandfather and her great uncle in the disaster. Ms Williams is a founding member of the Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Society, which represents the interests of the descendants. "Today is an extraordinarily momentous day for all Australians connected with this tragic disaster," Ms Williams said. "Having had a grandfather and great-uncle as civilian internees on Montevideo Maru always meant the story was important to me, as it is to so many generations of families whose men perished. I could never understand why it was not a more powerful part of our Australian WWII history. Being part of the Silentworld team that has found the wreck has been both hugely emotional and also fulfilling."

Australian Army Chief Lieutenant General Simon Stuart said those involved had met a "terrible fate at sea". "Today we remember their service, and the loss of all those aboard, including the 20 Japanese guards and crew, the Norwegian sailors and the hundreds of civilians from many nations," he said.

"I want to thank the Silentworld team and the dedicated researchers, including the Unrecovered War Casualties team at army, who have never given up hope of finding the final resting place of the Montevideo Maru."

"A loss like this reaches down through the decades and reminds us all of the human cost of conflict."

The discovery of the SS Montevideo Maru shipwreck has given family members like Cathy closure.

The Japanese prisoner of war ship was transporting Australians and others to Hainan Island when it was sunk by US Navy submarine the USS Sturgeon.

The Sturgeon fired its four torpedoes at the Montevideo Maru. Lifeboats onboard the vessel were launched, but all capsized and the ship sank in less than 11 minutes.

Many families were not told of their relatives' deaths for years.

Also on board the Montevideo Maru were Australian soldiers who had been stationed with Lark Force at Rabaul. They were captured by conquering Japanese soldiers just weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbour. Months later, hundreds of handwritten letters written by the men were dropped from the skies by Japanese bombers over Port Moresby.

Australia's worst maritime disaster commemorated 80 years on

July 1 marks the 80th anniversary of Australia's worst maritime disaster, the sinking of the Montevideo Maru during World War II. The ship was bound for a Japanese prisoner of war camp when a US Navy submarine fired on and sunk the vessel, killing 1,053 Australians.

By the time they reached their intended destination, all of the authors were dead.

Among them was Ronald Freeman, a gunner with the 17th anti-tank battery in Rabaul, who signed off a letter to his pregnant wife Dorothy and his two-year-old daughter Vicki: "I love you, I love. Kiss Vicki for me. Your loving husband."

A memorial was unveiled in 2012 to commemorate the disaster, with the ceremony attended by the then-Papua New Guinea high commissioner Peter Garrett.

The National Archives of Australia also launched a new website at the time listing all the names available of those on board, including a complete translated copy of the Japanese military's list of victims.

The deaths were not fully revealed until the end of the war. Relatives are able to search for family members and add their own photographs and messages to pay tribute to their loved ones.



Andrea Williams founded the Montevideo Maru Society to represent those who lost family in the disaster t (Supplied: Silentworld) It took just minutes for the ship to sink following the attack. (Supplied)

Sources - Brianna Morris-Grant, ABC News ; AAP/Australian War Memorial, file photo), Australian War Memorial) Silentworld

Australian Defence Force chief Angus Campbell renews calls to strip medals from Afghanistan war veterans

Defence Chief Angus Campbell has launched a fresh attempt to remove awards from some soldiers who held command positions in the Afghanistan war, following the damning findings of the Brereton inquiry.

The ABC can reveal General Campbell in recent days has written to several current and former Australian Defence Force members, informing them their honours for distinguished and conspicuous service on warlike operations could soon be cancelled.

In formal correspondence to a small group of Afghanistan veterans, the Defence Chief declares his "consideration of your command accountability is now closed" and revealed he had referred the termination of their decorations to Defence Minister Richard Marles.

"It is then for the minister to independently determine whether he accepts the assessment in my letter after considering the relevant information including your response," the general writes. "If he is of the view that your award should be cancelled, the minister will make a recommendation to the governor-general. The governor-general will then make a decision."

When releasing the findings of the Brereton inquiry in November 2020, General Campbell initially announced he had accepted a recommendation to remove the meritorious unit citation from the Special Operations Task Group (SOTG) following revelations of alleged war crimes.

Several months later, then-defence minister Peter Dutton announced he would overturn the recommendation, allowing around 3,000 SOTG personnel who served between 2007 and 2013 to keep their citations.

Last month General Campbell indicated "work was continuing" on possible internal disciplinary action related to failures of command accountability during the Afghanistan war when alleged crimes occurred.

Veterans groups are furious

Veterans groups have reacted furiously at the latest attempt to revoke honours awarded from the Afghanistan war, demanding the Albanese government again overrule the defence chief.

"Peter Dutton threw this out straight away in the last government when it was put before him," says Martin Hamilton-Smith, the national president of the Special Air Service Association. "I think Australians, veterans and their families are now going to wait and see whether the current government is going to stand with the veterans and their families or stand with the general who's looking increasingly isolated."

Mr Hamilton-Smith, a former SAS soldier and South Australian politician, has also suggested General Campbell should consider handing back his Distinguished Service Cross (DSC) as a sign of leadership.

"General Campbell was one of the very commanders in 2011/12 of all of the Australians in Afghanistan — on the back of the fighting effort of the SAS and Commandos he was awarded a DSC but he's not offering that — he's not offering that onto the table."

Steve Pilmore from the Commandos Association has also criticised General Campbell's recent actions, saying no action should be taken until allegations have been dealt with in courts. "This has dragged on for so long and I'm sure it's causing havoc in the families of some people when they're probably already dealing with some fairly major circumstances that come out of five, six, seven, eight [or] nine trips to Afghanistan."



Chief of the Defence Force, General Angus Campbell. (Supplied: ADF)

Andrew Greene, ABC News report 24 May 2023

Previous response in 2022 to the same attempt

"The Albanese government is committed to implementing the Brereton report."

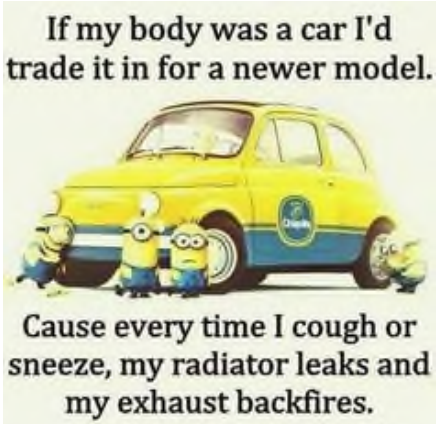
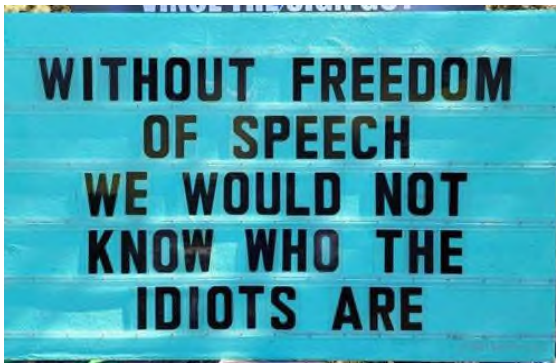
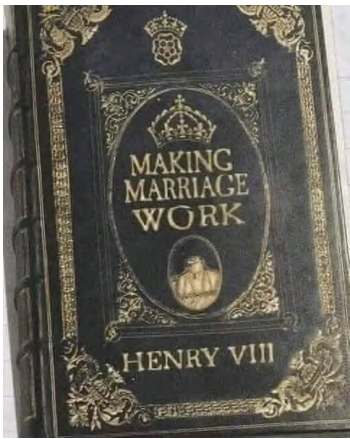
The federal opposition has accused the government of blindsiding defence personnel and veterans, reopening old wounds.

"Political leadership is critical," Shadow Defence Minister Andrew Hastie said.

"Richard Marles needs to explain why this process has been recommenced — why and what the outcome is that he's driving towards. It can be very disheartening for people who are trying to get on with defending the nation in very uncertain times".

Mr Hastie, a former SAS captain, insisted the former government had taken steps to address the allegations of war crimes and deal with broader cultural problems identified by the Brereton Inquiry. "I stand by the record of the former government, I helped initiate command reform of the Special Air Service regiment — a good reform," he said. "And if Richard Marles is going to do different things, he needs to explain why."

Matthew Doran, ABC News report Nov 2022



I joined a health club last
year,
Spent about 400 bucks.
Haven't lost a pound.
Apparently you have to go
there.





Pre internet chat room using
An old version of windows...

C
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S



They're cute and look harmless but they are loud, incredibly expensive to keep, and absolutely untrainable! The other one is a kangaroo. I don't know anything about kangaroos...



A recent study has found that women who carry a little extra weight live longer than the men who mention it.

I said I was good at making decisions. I didn't say the decisions I made were good.

Vietnam Veterans Peacekeepers & Peacemakers Association Inc.

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Port Macquarie 2444

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Veterans Federation of Australia

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PARTNERS OF VETERANS ASSOCIATION Port Macquarie HASTINGS GROUP

The Partners of Veterans PMQ Hastings Group meet for Lunch
at 12.30pm onwards on the Third Wednesday of each month

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