

Veterans Support Centre CONTACT FRONT



Nov/Dec 2023

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



Making the best of being away from home at Christmas

Details of these pictures - see pg 3



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Hastings Manning Macleay Branch VVPPAA Inc
At Wauchope Wellbeing Centre, located within the Wauchope Club Ltd (upstairs)

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PAGE INDEX

Pgs 6 - 7	Battle of Long Tan 57 years on
Pg 8 - 9	True hero of Vietnam farewelled
Pgs 11	Tomb of the unknown soldier, Westminster Abbey England
Pgs 12 - 13	Responding to national emergencies
Pgs 14 - 15	At war for Christmas
Pgs 16 - 17	Defence overhaul
Pgs 18 - 19	Reports and warning for veterans
Pg 21	Triton drone - hopes and delivery delays
Pgs 22 - 23	Christmas chuckles
Pgs 24 - 25	Post 9/11, Afghanistan and Iraq
Pgs 26 - 27	Australia carries out joint military drills with Philippines amid tensions with China in disputed seas
Pgs 30 - 33	Australian War Stories
Pgs 34 - 35	Taipans Grounded
Pgs 36 - 37	Colonial period, 1788-1901
Pg 38 - 39	Chuckle pages - ADULT HUMOUR

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From the Editor's Desk

Hello again,

To all of our readers, veterans, supporters and advertisers and their loved ones, I wish you a peaceful Christmas and all of the things you wish for yourself for 2024, let's hope it will be filled with peace and contentment.

If you do not like adult language and jokes PLEASE avoid the last 2 pages instead of making a complaint - they are pages for veterans and like-minded souls. Other milder jokes can be found in the centre with a Christmassy theme. Or - if enough folk complain I can take them out - the pages not the person!

If Christmas time is overwhelming for you PLEASE don't struggle. Reach out to family, a neighbour, a mate or call one of the many help lines to talk to someone who will care.

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Jill Opie, Editor

FRONT COVER -

Serving overseas during conflicts, away from family and friends, is not easy. At certain times of the year, such as Christmas, it can be even more challenging. Now, imagine back to a time without email, mobile phones and video calls. Letters to and from home were very important during the Vietnam War. Newer technologies, such as audio tapes and television programs, also helped. Two Vietnam veterans shared their personal reflections on an unusual Christmas in the jungle.

Top left- Crew members conduct Christmas prayers aboard HMAS Vendetta (II) during their deployment to Vietnam, December 1969.

Top right-Members of the 3rd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (3RAR), decorate a rubber tree with Christmas tinsel at their base in Vietnam, December 1967.

Bottom left-Airmen of the RAAF contingent gather to sing Christmas carols at the Vung Tau Special Zone, Vietnam, 24 December 1966. AWM VN/66/0110/05

Bottom right-A member of the 110th Signal Squadron detachment and a local worker distribute Christmas gifts to orphans in Saigon, Vietnam, 25 December 1969.

All from DVA/ANZAC portal

ALL veterans are supported by the Veterans Support Centre which is also part of the Hastings Wellbeing Centre (operates out of the Club/sub-branch facilities at Wauchope). Contact us if you need help or advice, information, a cuppa with like-minded folk - phone (leave a message if no answer and we will get back to you), email or pop in during open hours (Mon, Tues, Thurs 1030 - 1330).

E mail - **Vets614@gmail.com**
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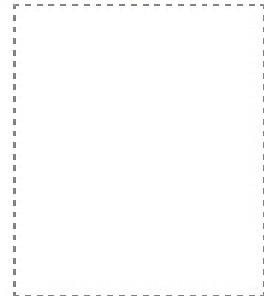


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Battle of Long Tan - 57 years on



A member from the Long Tan Veteran's Association enjoys a ride in an Australian Army M113 armoured personnel carrier.

Author Corporal Rebecca Draheim

A member from the Long Tan Veteran's Association shares stories with soldiers

Author Corporal Rebecca Draheim



Australian Army soldiers from the 6th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment with members from the Long Tan Veterans Association attend the 57th anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan service held at St. John's Cathedral, Brisbane.

Story by Cpl Rebecca Draheim, photo by Cpl Nicole Dorrett

Battle of Long Tan - 57 years on

Marking 57 years since the battle, the camaraderie and unspoken exchanges among veterans were unmistakable as they met at St John's Cathedral in Brisbane to honour the service and sacrifice of all members involved in the Battle of Long Tan.

Soldiers from Delta Company 6th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment joined veterans, partners and family members to commemorate those who fought in the battle.

Shared glances, subtle smiles, firm handshakes and knowing winks echoed of reminiscent bonds, not unlike those shared by members of Delta Company today.

More than a commemorative occasion, this event was also an opportunity for current soldiers and veterans to come together, bridging the generational gap created by time.

Lieutenant Nicholas Linden said many invaluable lessons could be drawn from their experiences. "It's also an opportunity for soldiers to feel proud and share stories which are enriching professionally," Lieutenant Linden said. "By preserving connections, we ensure that the stories, experiences and lessons of the past are carried forward, providing valuable insights and a sense of unity for soldiers today."

Following the commemoration, the veterans were welcomed back to Gallipoli Barracks for a barbecue, accompanied by a presentation showcasing contemporary tactics in the modern training facilities.

Corporal Matthew Cook conducted the demonstration, which sparked significant interest from veterans and drew a large crowd.

Using the weapon training simulation system, Corporal Cook negotiated a simulated enemy ambush, which impressed and energised the onlooking veterans.

A veteran of Alpha Company who was among the reinforcements during Long Tan, Terrance Armistead said he wanted to join in.

"What they have now is much more modern," Mr Armistead said.



The **Battle of Long Tan** (18 August 1966) took place in a rubber plantation near Long Tân, in Phước Tuy Province, South Vietnam, during the Vietnam War. The action was fought between Viet Cong (VC) and People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) units and elements of the 1st Australian Task Force (1 ATF).

Australian signals intelligence (SIGINT) had tracked the VC 275th Regiment and D445 Battalion moving to a position just north of Long Tan. By 16 August, it was positioned near Long Tan outside the range of the 1 ATF artillery at Nui Dat. Using mortars and recoilless rifles (RCLs), on the night of 16/17 August, the VC attacked Nui Dat from a position 2 kilometres (1.2 mi) to the east, until counter-battery fire made it stop. The next morning D Company, 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (6 RAR), departed Nui Dat to locate the firing positions and determine the direction of the VC withdrawal. D Company found weapon pits and firing positions for mortars and RCLs, and around midday on 18 August made contact with VC elements.

Facing a larger force, D Company called in artillery support. Heavy fighting ensued as the VC attempted to encircle and destroy the Australians, who were resupplied several hours later by two UH-1B Iroquois from No. 9 Squadron RAAF. With the help of strong artillery fire, D Company held off a regimental assault before a relief force of M113 armoured personnel carriers and infantry from Nui Dat reinforced them that night. Australian forces then pulled back to evacuate their casualties and formed a defensive position; when they swept through the area next day, the VC had withdrawn and the operation ended on 21 August.

Although 1 ATF initially viewed Long Tan as a defeat, the action was later re-assessed as a strategic victory since it prevented the VC moving against Nui Dat. The VC also considered it a victory, due to the political success of an effective ambush and securing of the area around the village. Whether the battle impaired the capabilities of the VC is disputed.

Source - [defence.gov.au/news](https://www.defence.gov.au/news) (Brisbane service) and Wikipedia for battle summary, DVA images this page of members of 6 RAR

A true hero of Vietnam War farewelled

The man whose company held back a reinforced North Vietnamese regiment at Long Tan, before fighting for his soldiers to be recognised, has died.

Lieutenant Colonel Harry Smith, the national serviceman turned career soldier, died on August 20 at the Sunshine Coast aged 90, two days after the battle's 57th anniversary.

After serving during the Malayan Emergency, Lieutenant Colonel (then Major) Smith rose to prominence in Vietnam as Officer Commanding of Delta Company, 6th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment, during the Battle of Long Tan.

Lieutenant Colonel Smith's company was patrolling a rubber plantation when it ran into a much larger enemy force advancing towards the Australian base at Nui Dat on August 18, 1966.

In an article published in the Australian War Memorial's *Wartime* magazine in 2006, Lieutenant Colonel Smith said: "Almost continuous VC tracer rounds lit up the gloom as they raced past us like supersonic fireflies. The heavy rain turned the earth into the mud we lay in. White latex oozed from bullet holes in rubber trees. VC snipers went up trees, to be shot or blown down."

During the battle, Delta Company held off numerous enemy attack waves thanks to tenacious fighting and artillery support.

"The volume and noise of all the artillery and small arms fire was horrendous – deafening – but, in hindsight, wonderful music," Lieutenant Colonel Smith said.

The enemy got so close to Delta Company's position, Lieutenant Colonel Smith ordered his famous fire-support request: "Drop 50. Danger Close. Fire for effect".

Headquarters refused until Lieutenant Colonel Smith grabbed the radio handset from his signalman and shouted, "give us the f— guns where we want them or you will lose the bloody lot of us".

Despite being resupplied with ammo dropped from Royal Australian Air Force helicopters, Delta Company was on the verge of being overrun until armoured personnel carriers arrived with reinforcements and broke up the enemy massing for a final attack.



Major Harry Smith in Saigon, Vietnam, August 1966. Story by Warrant Officer Class Two Max Bree. Photos courtesy of the Australian War Memorial.



Warrant Officer Class Two Jack Kirby and Major Harry Smith, front right, test-firing an SG-43 Goryunov heavy machine gun captured at the Battle of Long Tan.

A true hero of Vietnam War farewelled

"All firing ceased as though the tap was turned off," Lieutenant Colonel Smith said.

He later recalled his men were too busy doing what they needed to repel the onslaughts that fear of what could have been only sank in when the battle ended.

"Outnumbered, we just got on with what we had trained for – killing the enemy – to survive," Lieutenant Colonel Smith said. "The dedication of my men to helping and giving covering fire to their mates and assisting the wounded was outstanding."

Delta Company lost 18 soldiers killed and 24 wounded.

Writing later, Lieutenant Colonel Smith said Australians buried 245 enemy and found other graves along bloodied withdrawal routes.

"Documents indicated their losses were some 800 killed or died from wounds, with around another 1000 wounded," he said.

After returning from Vietnam, Lieutenant Colonel Smith served overseas and then as the chief instructor at the Parachute Training School. He left the Army in 1976 following a parachuting injury.

Lieutenant Colonel Smith received a Military Cross for his actions at Long Tan, but was angered when few of the decorations he recommended for his men were awarded.

This began a two-decade fight to have the correct medals presented. Lt Col Smith said he refused to withdraw at Long Tan, and he would never withdraw from the fight to have his men properly recognised.

In 2008, Lieutenant Colonel Smith's award was upgraded to a Star of Gallantry and several of his soldiers also received upgrades.

After a 2016 review, the last of his men received the medals Lieutenant Colonel Smith had recommended 50 years earlier.

Major Harry Smith receiving the ribbon to the Military Cross for Gallantry, January 1967.



Sources – CONTACT on line Sept 2023 (with copyright permission), AWM photos, 9 News/ABC news

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11th November, each year, We will remember

On November 7th, 1920, in strictest secrecy, four unidentified British bodies were exhumed from temporary battlefield cemeteries at Ypres, Arras, the Asine and the Somme.

None of the soldiers who did the digging were told why.

The bodies were taken by field ambulance to GHQ at St-Pol-Sur-Ter Noise. Once there, the bodies were draped with the union flag.

Sentries were posted and Brigadier-General Wyatt and a Colonel Gell selected one body at random. The other three were reburied.

A French Honour Guard was selected and stood by the coffin overnight of the chosen soldier overnight.

On the morning of the 8th November, a specially designed coffin made of oak from the grounds of Hampton Court arrived and the Unknown Warrior was placed inside.

On top was placed a crusaders sword and a shield on which was inscribed:

"A British Warrior who fell in the GREAT WAR 1914-1918 for King and Country".

On the 9th of November, the Unknown Warrior was taken by horse-drawn carriage through Guards of Honour and the sound of tolling bells and bugle calls to the quayside.

There, he was saluted by Marechal Foch and loaded onto HMS Vernon bound for Dover. The coffin stood on the deck covered in wreaths, surrounded by the French Honour Guard.

Upon arrival at Dover, the Unknown Warrior was met with a nineteen gun salute - something that was normally only reserved for Field Marshals.

A special train had been arranged and he was then conveyed to Victoria Station, London.

He remained there overnight, and, on the morning of the 11th of November, he was finally taken to Westminster Abbey.

The idea of the unknown warrior was thought of by a Padre called David Railton who had served on the front line during the Great War the union flag he had used as an altar cloth whilst at the front, was the one that had been draped over the coffin.

It was his intention that all of the relatives of the 517,773 combatants whose bodies had not been identified could believe that the Unknown Warrior could very well be their lost husband, father, brother or son...

THIS is the reason we wear poppies.

We do not glorify war.

We remember - with humility - the great and the ultimate sacrifices that were made, not just in this war, but in every war and conflict where our service personnel have fought - to ensure the liberty and freedoms that we now take for granted.

Every year, on the 11th of November, we remember the Unknown Warrior.

At the going down of the sun, and in the morning, we will remember them.



Above and Right - The tomb of the unknown soldier at rest in Westminster Abbey, England



Source - article supplied by Peter Dorman

Responding to domestic emergencies hampering Defence's war-fighting capabilities

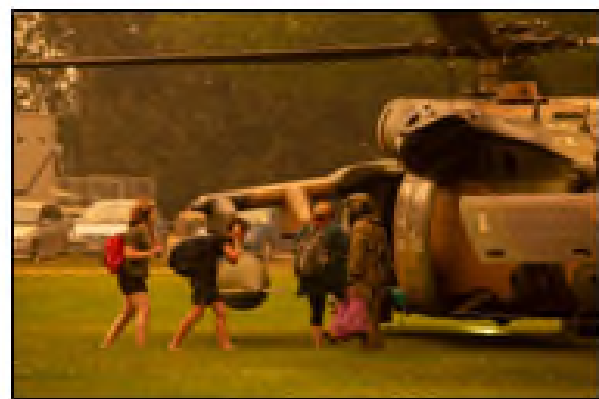
Australia's war-fighting capability is being compromised by "near-persistent" demands to respond to domestic emergencies, according to findings from a parliamentary inquiry.

"If the civilian community are over-reliant on the ADF to provide responses to now predictable annual natural disasters in Australia and our near region, this provides an easy opportunity to take hostile cyber, kinetic or hybrid actions, coercing governments to make impossible choices," the report stated.

The committee spent two months examining the Defence Department's annual report from 2021-2022, uncovering numerous deficiencies in recruitment and critical military assets.

Chair of the defence sub-committee, Julian Hill, said more than 50 per cent of Defence personnel had assisted in COVID, bushfire or flood relief in recent years.

"They cannot be seen as a shadow workforce, because it risks and degrades their war-fighting capability, which is what the country trains and pays them for," the Labor MP said. "It's also creating a national security risk."



Left above - The government sent the Army to Kangaroo Island to help respond to devastating bushfires in 2020. (DoD)

Right above - Defence has warned it cannot always be available as a first port-of-call in a disaster. (DoD)

Alleged war crimes

The committee also urged Australia to "draw a line in the sand" on alleged war crimes committed by elite personnel in Afghanistan. As a society, Australia risks repeating another Vietnam and callously increasing Veteran suicide if we lose perspective and balance," the report stated.

Following the Inspector-General of the Australian Defence Force Afghanistan Inquiry, so far a veteran from the Special Air Service Regiment (SASR) has been arrested, and Defence has warned of more "uncomfortable days" ahead. But Mr Hill said the committee wanted to "rebalance the national conversation" and "regain perspective" to minimise the impacts of the "long shadow" of conflict in Afghanistan. "It's about time that we accepted that the actions of a few cannot tar the reputations of the many forever," he said.

Natural disaster responses

The committee also investigated a shortfall in Defence recruitment and retention, blaming job dissatisfaction, in part, on ongoing pressures to respond to natural disasters.

Instead of growing the Defence Force by 1,000 members, the ADF went backwards by around 900 personnel, the report found, a reduction of nearly 8 per cent on the previous financial year.

"The trend in recent years does not demonstrate and inspire confidence that Defence will be able to stabilise current numbers, let alone grow the workforce over the forward estimates," the report said.

It also pointed to family circumstances, including ongoing posting relocations, and remuneration shortfalls as other areas for retention.

The committee made 12 recommendations, including that Defence make six-monthly reports to monitor progress in recruitment and retention.

Personnel can't work in 40-degree heat

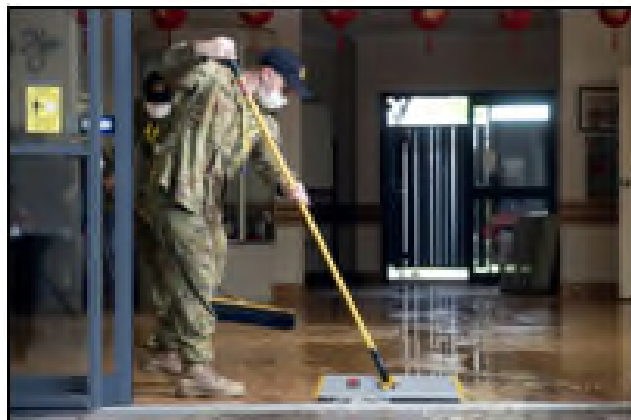
The committee travelled to bases across the country during its inquiry where it picked up "peculiar" shortfalls.

At RAAF Base Learmonth, on the north-west Cape Peninsula of Western Australia, sheds without air conditioning often produced temperatures above 40 degrees which meant it was only possible to work 10 per cent of the time.

Responding to domestic emergencies hampering Defence's war-fighting capabilities

Restricted sewerage systems at the base also restricted the number of people who could work at the base. "This is clearly ridiculous," the report said.

In nearby Exmouth, at the Harold E Holt Naval Communication Station, a pier used for diesel refuelling had fallen into a "seriously disturbing" state of disrepair.



Left above - Defence has been called in to assist on several floods and fires in recent years. (DoD)
Right above - Defence personnel were also called in to assist in critically understaffed aged care facilities during the COVID-19 pandemic. (Australian Army: Private Michael Currie)

Government begins consulting on new flood and fire response that won't rely on armed forces - Australians are being asked to respond to floods and fire without relying on the defence force.

Senator Watt said 80 per cent of Australia's local government areas had experienced a natural disaster over the past few years but expecting the army to turn up during times of need wasn't sustainable. "In disaster situations, they will always be there for our extreme emergencies and to help people recover," he said. "But we do need to recognise that they can't be the first port of call when they've got other responsibilities to attend to."

Earlier this year, the Defence Strategic Review found that Defence's resources were strained by national emergencies, putting Australia's military at risk of being "overwhelmed" and undermining its primary objective of defending Australia. It warned state governments and local councils they would have to go it alone except in the worst disasters.

Early calls for standing disaster reserves

Neil James from advocacy group the Australia Defence Association said he would be providing a submission to the consultation. "We will point out that the defence force has been too often dragged away, because it's really the federal government's first reflex action when the public is screaming for something," Mr James said.

He also said the public was confused about who was responsible for managing disasters, and responses should come from the ground up, and not top-down. Mr James suggested a new emergency services reserve could be established. "What they need to do is they need to raise some form of a [Rural Fire Service] equivalent to the Army Reserve in the major cities," he said.

"All these people bitching and moaning about bushfire smoke could actually do something when the problem arrives, and not believe that you need to drag in the army from Queensland and South Australia to fight a bushfire in New South Wales, because the people in NSW aren't willing to do it themselves."

Posted 9 Aug 2023

Sources - ABC News, overlapping reports from Aug 2023 by national rural reporter Kath Sullivan and Sept 2023, by Jane Toomey, ABC News,

At war for Christmas

On Christmas Eve 1914, soldiers of the British, French and German armies were hunkered down in trenches on the Western Front, their thoughts on their loved ones at home. As night fell, the sound of German soldiers singing carols drifted across no man's land, and small fir trees and lanterns appeared on the tops of their trenches. Messages were shouted between the two sides, and some soldiers ventured out to meet and exchange gifts. The momentum for goodwill gained pace, and on Christmas Day more men met to talk, take photographs, and even play football.

Christmas and war are not compatible, but too often they are thrust together. The Christmas truce of 1914 -- a series of unofficial ceasefires -- was a statement of peace and humanity amid one of history's most brutal wars. These ceasefires were permitted by some officers to allow the men a chance to improve living conditions in the trenches. But not all troops took part: in some areas, time was given only to recover and bury the dead; in other sectors, there were casualties as fighting continued. The following year, strongly worded orders from the high commands of both sides were issued in the lead-up to Christmas warning against further fraternisation. A small number of ceasefires were declared, but they were not nearly as widespread as in 1914.

By the time Australians experienced Christmas on the Western Front, the British command saw the date as an opportunity to wreak even more havoc on the enemy. Australian official historian Charles Bean records that on 25 December 1918, "at the hour when it was thought probable that the Germans would be sitting down to their midday feast, every gun of the [British] Fourth and Fifth Armies fired two rounds at the points where the enemy's troops and staffs might be foregathering". Bean notes that the order was considered "ruthless" and "repugnant" by many of the British troops, who were "by no means opposed to 'disgracing' Christmas by exhibitions of brotherliness and good humour".

Hundreds of thousands of Australians have spent Christmas at war: freezing in First World War trenches, as prisoners of war of the Japanese, or on reconnaissance and ambush operations in Vietnam. Even today Australian soldiers find themselves spending Christmas far from home, on operations in Afghanistan.

Soldiers are not forgotten at this time of year, and efforts have always been made to bring a little joy -- and a decent meal -- to those serving, or those recovering from wounds. For Christmas 1915, the Australian Comforts Fund Committee distributed 20,000 boxes containing handkerchiefs, cigars, cigarettes and matches to men in camp in Egypt. Many had just returned from Gallipoli. In a letter home in early January 1916, Sister Letitia Moreton of the Australian Army Nursing Service described the efforts that had been made for wounded men recovering at the 2nd Australian General Hospital in Egypt:

We gave our patients out at Ma'adi Hospital a very nice little Xmas. A very nice dinner, roast turkey, chicken, ham, plenty vegetables, plum pudding, claret cup, beer, soft drinks, sweets, etc. They did enjoy it, poor things. The Drs helped us with it too, one carved the turkey and ham while the other gave out the drinks. The place was rather nicely decorated and everyone enjoyed the day.

Sadly, that was Sister Moreton's last Christmas: the following year she was posted to India for service, and died there of enteric fever in November.

Christmas is often a marker of time for a soldier at war. They count their service by each one that comes and goes, and are optimistic that it will be the last spent away from home. In 1918, Private William Lewis of the 17th Battalion sent a pretty Christmas card from Belgium to his mother and younger brother Charlie, wishing a "all the best and 'hoping to be with you all for the next, 1919'". Fortunately, he was.

The freezing cold Christmases of the Western Front gave way to tropical heat and humidity during the Second World War, as most Australian servicemen spent at least one festive season in the Pacific. But that did not necessarily mean an end to the traditional hot Christmas lunch: in his book *The hard slog*, Karl James writes that on Bougainville for Christmas 1944, the senior command of the Australian II Corps sat down to "turkey, ham, fresh potatoes peas and onions, followed by plum pudding and sauce". The 26th Battalion held a Christmas Eve concert party that included a jazz performance, and went swimming on Christmas Day; and the 27th Battalion ate fresh fish and roast pork from wild pigs.



Left - Staff and patients at No. 14 Australian General Hospital, Egypt, decorated for Christmas.

At war for Christmas

Troops of the 9th Infantry Battalion enjoy a traditional Christmas lunch on the island of Bougainville, 1944. Some prisoners of war even managed to rustle up a decent meal for Christmas. Jock Mathieson was interred at a camp on Banka Island for Christmas 1943. On 24 December he wrote to a friend, Captain Wilma Oram of the 2/13th Australian General Hospital, who was interred at the nearby women's camp:

Great preparations are being made for tomorrow's food. I believe we will be eating throughout the day. Three pigs have been slaughtered - they are being prepared just now for the cooking pot. The local authorities have contributed a great deal towards tomorrow's food. There will be Church services and carol singing.

Other prisoners of war were grateful to the Red Cross for providing food parcels that made Christmas a little bit special - but they would have much preferred their freedom. WJ Wood was a British pilot who was captured after the Fall of Singapore and was sent to Japan. In 1944, he wrote this poem:

*This is but a memory
Of a Christmas one of three
I'm trusting God I don't see four
As a Prisoner of War.*

*It was no doubt the best of three
Thanks to Red Cross Society
But let us hope in Him above
We spend the next with those we love.*

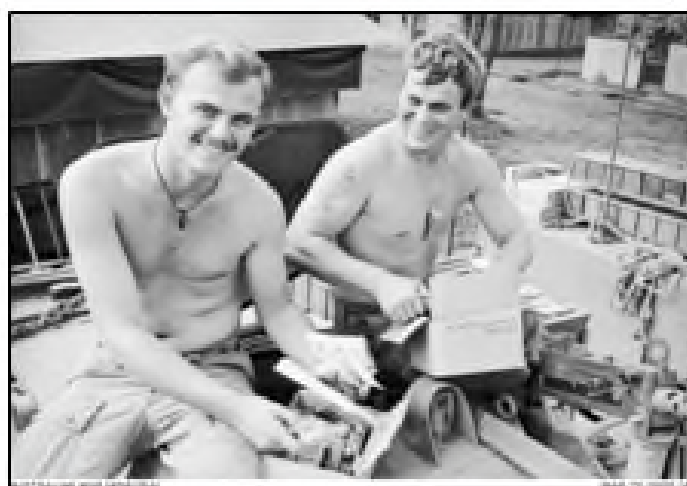
Christmas for those who served in the Vietnam War may have featured festive concerts by Australian entertainers, and parcels provided by the Australian Forces Overseas Fund. In *Fighting to the finish*, the final volume of the official history of the Vietnam war, Ashley Ekins records the diary entry of Captain David Wilkins of C Company, 8RAR, who wrote that his company's officers and sergeants began Christmas Day 1969 by "serving coffee royale [coffee laced with rum] to the diggers IN BED. Later we continued our duties and served the diggers Xmas dinner, much to their delight. Will have to knock 'em back to size tomorrow." They had earned it, having spent the previous ten days on reconnaissance and ambush operations in rugged, jungle-covered territory west of Binh Ba.

However, Ekins writes that the soldiers of 8RAR were not so lucky, and found themselves continuing to fight in spite of a so-called Christmas Day truce. Second Lieutenant Neil Smith of 8RAR, who was stationed at a remote fire support base, wrote: "Christmas Day was just another day to us. The battalion had four contacts on Christmas Day and killed two VC [Viet Cong]."

Across the world, and through the ages, diggers have always yearned to "be home by Christmas".

Below left - Troops of the 9th Infantry Battalion enjoy a traditional Christmas lunch on the island of Bougainville, 1944.

Below right - Troopers Ian Johnston (left) and Graham "Shorty" Maycock of B Squadron, 3rd Cavalry Regiment, open Christmas parcels from the Australian Forces Overseas Fund at Nui Dat, South Vietnam, 1969.



Source - Australian War Memorial article by Emma Campbell, 2012

Australia unveils biggest defence overhaul since World War II

Australia will focus on longer-range capabilities and strengthening operations of its northern military bases.

Australia has said the acquisition of nuclear-powered submarines, long-range strike capabilities and its northern bases will be among the country's six priority areas after a major review of its defence strategy found the armed forces were not "fully fit for purpose".

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese initiated the Defence Strategic Review shortly after he was elected in May last year.

A redacted version of the classified Defence Strategic Review - led by former Australian Defence Forces chief Angus Houston and former Defence Minister Stephen Smith - and the government's response was released publicly on Monday.

Noting that the US was "no longer the unipolar leader of the Indo-Pacific", the review noted "major strategic power competition" had returned the region and its intensity "should be seen as the defining feature of our region and time".

The defence overhaul comes amid rising tension in East Asia - particularly over the self-ruled island of Taiwan - and as China forges ahead with the modernisation of its military.

Albanese said the government would adopt three other priorities recommended in the review for immediate action: initiatives to improve the growth and retention of a highly skilled defence workforce, improving Australia's capacity to rapidly translate new technologies into defence, and a deepening of defence and diplomatic partnerships with "key partners" in the Indo-Pacific.

"The Defence Strategic Review, and the Government's response, is about maintaining peace, security and prosperity in our region," Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Richard Marles said in a statement on Monday, stressing that work on the initiatives would begin straightaway.

"There are a lot of tough decisions which need to be made, but in doing so, we are making them in the best interest of our Defence Force and our nation."

The report stressed the need for Australia to deepen its engagement and collaboration with countries from Southeast Asia to the Pacific, as well as with India and Japan.

Albanese noted the review's recommendations would strengthen Australia's "national security and ensure our readiness for future challenges" and also "help build a more secure Australia and a more stable and prosperous region".

Contd next page



The characteristics and range of Collins Class submarines have been tailored specifically for its defence and two-ocean surveillance role in the Royal Australian Navy. Designed to be as quiet as advanced technology can achieve, Collins Class submarines have been developed from five generations of submarines designed and built by the Swedish Navy. Collins Class submarines HMAS Collins, HMAS Farncomb, HMAS Dechaineux and HMAS Sheean in formation while transiting through Cockburn Sound, Western Australia. Collins Class submarines are an essential part of Australia's naval capability, providing a strategic advantage in terms of surveillance and protection of our maritime approaches.

Right - The review recommended Australia improve its long-range strike capability and its ability to operate from its northern bases - Australian Defence Force



Australia unveils biggest defence overhaul since World War II

Cont'd Analysts welcomed the report's stress on "statecraft" and "all elements of national power".

"The Defence Strategic Review is a welcome articulation of the need to integrate defence strategy and foreign policy," David Andrews, a senior policy advisor at the National Security College at the Australian National University, told Al Jazeera in written comment. "These two elements must work in unison if Australia is to meaningfully address the emergent challenges in the Indo-Pacific."

China ties

Albanese's government has sought to repair Australia's damaged relationship with Beijing, which deteriorated under the previous administration of Scott Morrison amid disputes over alleged foreign influence operations, trade and issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic and human rights.

Beijing was also angered over Australia's decision to join the AUKUS pact under which it will receive the nuclear-powered submarines mentioned in the review from the United States, as well as its membership of the four-power defence and security grouping known as the Quad.

The Fujian, China's third aircraft carrier, is currently undergoing propulsion testing and is a key component of the Chinese navy's ongoing modernisation.

The ship is the country's first carrier to be fully developed domestically and uses electromagnetic catapults and arresting devices to enable planes to take off and land on its deck. Marking the navy's founding on Sunday, state media reported that the country was likely to need more carriers because of China's "vast sea areas".

Still, Marles stressed the need for Australia to develop a stable relationship with China, which he said was in the interest of both countries and the wider region.

"Australia will continue to cooperate with China where we can, disagree where we must, manage our differences wisely, and, above all else, engage in and vigorously pursue our own national interest," Marles said.



Left - The M777 replaces the L119 105mm light gun and the M198 155mm medium gun in Royal Australian Artillery units. This equipment is a significant advance in Army's capabilities and has a much higher level of digital connectivity. This allows more rapid, safe and accurate application of effects across the battlespace. The M777 can link with Australian and coalition networks providing accurate and timely responses to support ground forces. The M777 provides direct support to combat troops through offensive and defensive fires with conventional and precision-guided projectiles. It can also employ illuminating and smoke projectiles.

Right - The F-35A Lightning II is the Australian Defence Force's first fifth-generation air combat capability. It is a highly advanced multi-role, supersonic, stealth fighter which will meet Australia's requirements to defeat current and emerging threats.

The F-35A is at the forefront of air combat technology. Advanced sensors and data fusion allow it to gather and share information faster than ever before. Capable of supersonic flight while retaining stealth, the F-35A has extraordinary acceleration, agility and 9G manoeuvrability. The F-35A also provides its pilots with significantly higher levels of lethality and survivability in combat.

The first F-35A aircraft was accepted into Australian service in 2018. The first F-35A squadron, No. 3 Squadron, became operational in 2021. All 72 aircraft are expected to be fully operational by 2023.



Sources - [aljazeera.com](https://www.aljazeera.com), [ABC news](https://www.abcnews.com.au) and [defence.gov.au](https://www.defence.gov.au)

REPORTS

PRESIDENTS REPORT

PLEASE read the report from our Head Office (on page 20) which warns about services being offered by organizations offering assistance to veterans with their DVA claims and then taking considerable amounts of money from the veteran from their entitlements

Remember that the Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia and your own Veterans Support Centre here in Wauchope, offers assistance free of any charge to ALL veterans. Our trained Advocates make no charge and offer their qualified and experienced guidance and support totally free of charge.

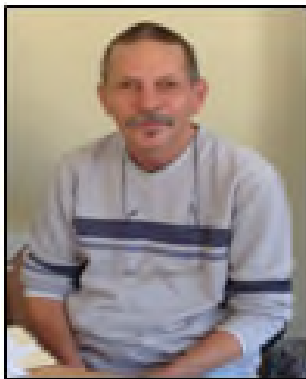
I recently attended the Vietnam Veterans sub-branch Conference at Wallsend and you can read the report from there on the next page (and don't forget to read the warning on pg 20). It is fair to say that all branches are struggling with the falling numbers of members and also that the veterans are struggling with the lack of any improvement in the time taken by DVA to process claims.

Stay as well as you can and call out if you need help,

Bill Wagner
President



President
Bill Wagner



Membership Officer
Trevor Morrow

Membership Officers Report (October 2023)

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 will soon be time to renew your membership for 2024.

As at 6 October 2023 we have **64** financial members for this year. **Note** that for every membership payment of \$30.00 made here at your 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 safe and well.
Trevor Morrow, Membership Officer

Treasurer
Peter Dorman



Reports that VSC is
financial

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 (a veteran asked for a new CA photo - hope you like it)



Compensation
Advocate
Mike Opie

**REPORT FROM THE WALLSEND VETERAN SUPPORT CENTRE
SEPTEMBER CONFERENCE**

There is not a great deal to report at the present time. Our New Veteran Support Centre is up and running with a few teething problems to be rectified. Using the same office as the Sub-Branch Pensions Officer gets a bit claustrophobic but we get on well together and it works. Very shortly we will be moving into larger rooms located inside the Club itself.

Vietnam Veterans Day service was held at the Memorial Wall located in front of the RSL premises. About 60 members and partners attended. A lone piper played welcoming all to the service and then played the Last Post and Reveille. It was very much appreciated by all there. This was followed inside the Club with light lunch and refreshments

In August I was invited to Government House to attend the Vietnam and Korean Veterans Reception, which I accepted. At this function there were veterans from all over, mostly Vietnam Veterans. The Korean Veterans were represented by those who were still able and members of their family. At this gathering there were a number of veterans that I knew and had not seen for quite a while which gave us time to speak about the issues that concern us all.

There were the usual addresses by the dignitaries present. The speech by Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC, Governor of New South Wales I considered was straight to the point concerning all veterans. I managed to speak later to her personally regarding her speech, The Governor mentioned to me that she wanted to deliver a speech that was direct and to the point. After further conversation I asked if a copy of the speech could be forwarded to me, which I received via e mail. I have a copy of that speech. I have not included it as an attachment not knowing what the correct procedure was regarding this. I have copies of this with me.

=====

ADVOCATES REPORT

The details below are as accurate as I can but with the Advocate away at present it is hard to have complete details -

Over the last 4-5 weeks there has been at least six new veterans seeking assistance and guidance with their compensation and/or pension claims.

There are approximately 54 veterans with us at present whose claims (both DERCA and MERCA) are at various stages and awaiting some kind of action or response from DVA. The length of time their claims have been processing varies from a few months to over 12 months. Once the veteran comes to our Advocate, the follow up will be directed to the DVA delegate to try and get an outcome.

Some of our outstanding work is awaiting documents from Army Records or paperwork from the medical experts or awaiting appointments when there is a shortage of specialists.

There are also veterans who try to complete their own paperwork and then come to Veteran Support Centre for guidance and our Advocate has to deal with either a resubmission or amendments to the claim, fresh paperwork or time talking to the DVA delegates.

We have a qualified level 2 Advocate who volunteers for six hours each week at the Veteran Support Centre and can spend anything between 4 and 6 hours on several other days each week with claims, paperwork and following up phone calls and discussions with DVA delegates.

We are lucky to have another Advocate in training for Level 1 who just needs to attend his final training course to achieve his qualification. He spends six hours weekly in Veteran Support Centre reading and discussing on going claims to further his knowledge.

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

A WARNING FOR DVA CLIENTS!!!

Potential DVA clients should be aware that some organisations offering to advise veterans and submit their claims to the DVA are charging their clients for the privilege to do so. We have come across a number of such organisations whose main interests appear to take a sizable slice of any entitlements when equal, or, in our case, more superior services are available free of charge to the veteran.

One example of such organisations which is based in Queensland requires veterans to sign a six-page contract. The contract contains a commitment for the veteran to pay fees for service such as \$1,000 plus GST to submit a Freedom of Information request when the veteran can make the submission him/herself at no cost. An application for a pension increase can be provided by them at the cost to the client of four pension payments. Potentially, this could cost a client up to approx. \$10,000. Payments may also be required for the initial client interview.

Lump sum payments are charged at 5% plus GST. Late payments attract a 10% fee.

This type of organisation is not required to hold formal qualifications to advise our ADF community. You are obviously aware that our Association provides our services free of charge. Our Compensation and Well-Being staff are formally trained and possess vast experience. For many years we have taken on, on average, six new claimants each day, Monday to Friday 52 weeks per year.

Our National Executive warning about Aged Care

Aged Care is unfortunately of concern to all Vietnam veterans, the youngest of us being in our mid 70s. In June, a team from our National Office in Granville along with State Presidents' teams, gathered in Adelaide for our Annual General Meeting.

Aged Care was dominant among our considerations. On day one we spent some hours with the CEO of RSL Care, an acknowledged Aged Care expert. On day two we had discussions with DVA Deputy Commissioner, Janice Silby, who, of course, is an expert in the field. Our conclusion is that, the Aged Care arrangements for veterans, as well as suffering the present dysfunction of the general Aged Care system, has additional unsatisfactory aspects just for us.

It starts like this. When veterans who are under the care of DVA enter Aged Care they become the responsibility of the Department of Health, except for any pension entitlements which remain the responsibility of DVA. This can create some complexity as the list of DVA entitlements the veteran has been enjoying is not the same as the Department of Health's list.

But more importantly, on entering Aged Care, veterans are not asked to 'tick a box' signifying veteran status, despite the legislation specifying 'veterans' are a group (along with some others) with special needs. This means that Aged Care homes may not know of the veteran's service so that veterans fail to receive acknowledgement (such as on commemoration days) that the legislation mandates, leaving some feeling unappreciated and isolated.

This failure can go unchecked because DVA has no role in checking to see if veterans are being properly treated. In the past, intending to visit veterans in Aged Care homes to overcome this deficiency, we asked DVA to give us the location of the veterans they knew of. DVA, however, were unable to comply claiming privacy concerns.

How can we improve the system?

Identify veterans by 'ticking a box' on entering Aged Care and veterans being asked if they would like veteran visits.

Aged Care homes then advises DVA.

DVA, in turn, advises ex-service organisations.

Ex-service organisation then send welfare representatives to visit.

Also helpful would be an aligning of Department of Health entitlements to DVA entitlements. But what is vital is that none of us are left isolated and unappreciated in the last years of our lives.

Source - National Office, Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia, Inc.

Potent \$1.5 billion upgrade to Australia's maritime surveillance with manned and unmanned aircraft

Australia will purchase a fourth long-range Triton drone for maritime surveillance, despite the US Navy recently halting production of the expensive unmanned platform which critics warn is vulnerable to enemy attack.

The contentious American acquisition is part of a \$1.5 billion boost to the RAAF being unveiled on Tuesday that includes upgrades to the existing P-8A Poseidon fleet, allowing the patrol aircraft to eventually fire anti-ship missiles up to 1,000km.

Under the Poseidon upgrade program, the Department of Defence expects the first of its 14 Boeing-made aircraft to receive enhancements to anti-submarine warfare, maritime strike and intelligence collection capabilities from 2028. The entire fleet is expected to be completed by 2030.

Defence Industry Minister Pat Conroy says the P-8A upgrades and purchase of an additional MQ-4C Triton Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) will be "critical to our defence and particularly surveilling the northern approaches to Australia. The purchase of an additional Triton will enhance operations from Australia's northern bases, a priority under the Defence Strategic Review," Mr Conroy said. "The upgrades to the fleet of Poseidon aircraft strengthens our ability to secure and protect Australia's maritime interests."

Originating from the Global Hawk program, the MQ-4C Triton is manufactured by Northrop Grumman, boasting the ability to fly surveillance missions for more than 24 hours at altitudes exceeding 50,000 feet.



Above - The Air Force's P-8 Poseidon will gain the ability to fire missiles out to 1,000 kilometres.
(Defence Department: Kate Czerny)

Australia will buy another Triton drone from the United States.

Under the previous Coalition government, an initial order was made for three of the high altitude long endurance (HALE) aircraft with plans to eventually buy up to seven, but none have yet been delivered to Australia.

According to the Biden administration's latest Department of Defense budget, the Triton program will be terminated with production ceasing in 2024. The halted production will leave the US Navy with a total of 22 aircraft, well short of its earlier target of 70.

Decision to persevere with Triton drone 'strange'

Former Australian defence official Marcus Hellyer has described Labor's decision to persevere with the Triton as "strange". He predicts the program will undoubtedly cost more in both acquisition and sustainment than originally forecast. "Rather than getting in deeper and throwing good money after bad do we actually reconsider the whole thing and get out while we still can?" says Dr Hellyer, now with Strategic Analysis Australia. "We've been pursuing this capability for well over 20 years, we've been involved with the US on this program in various ways and we've been contributing financially to this program for a very long time. The question was always would we continue and get the full six or seven or would we get a smaller number but if we got a smaller number would it actually be a viable capability?"

However, the Triton acquisition is the right decision for Australia when combined with other steps being taken by the government, says Mr Conroy. "I think this is good technology that gives us that persistent longer-range presence, that complements the best maritime surveillance aircraft in the world in the P-8 Poseidon and investments we're making in space awareness," he said.

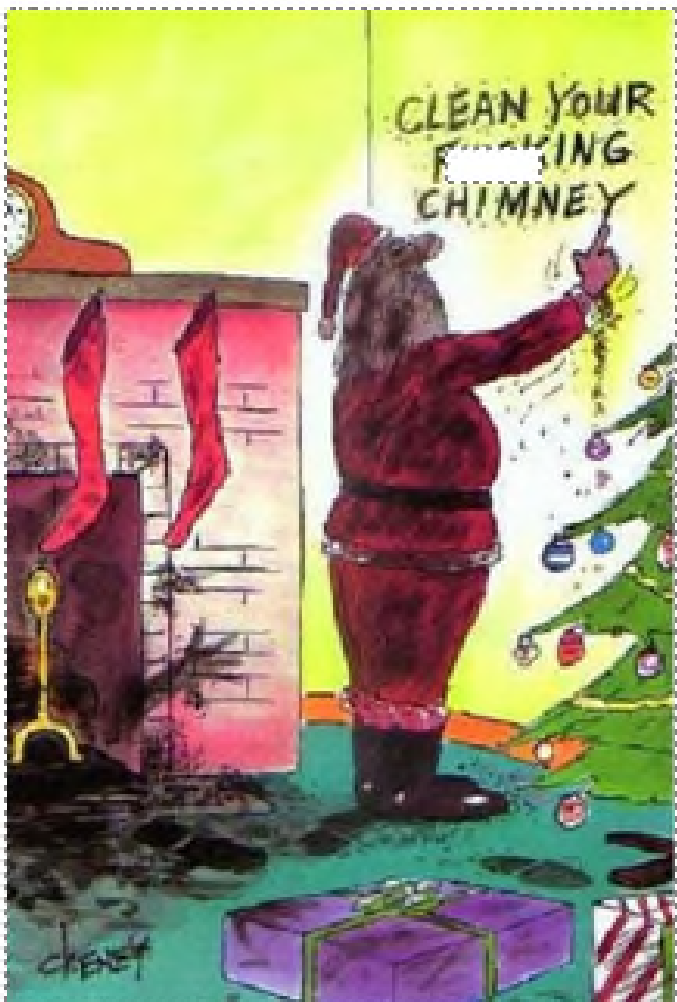
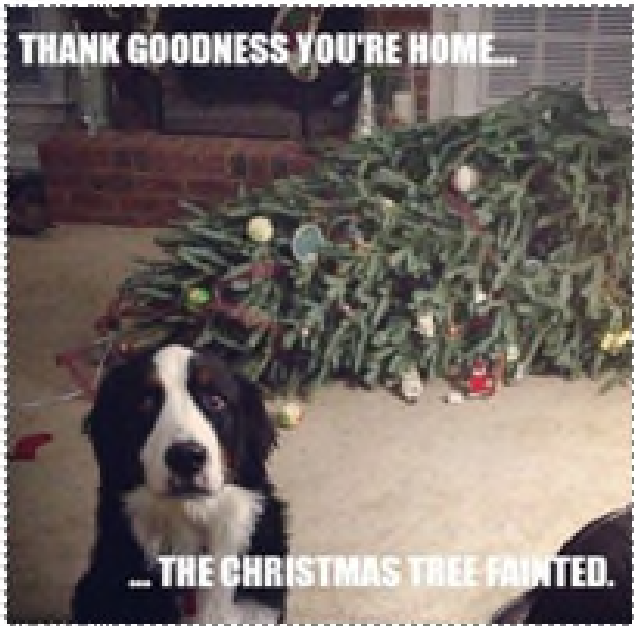
When Australia's Triton aircraft eventually arrive, they are expected to be housed at RAAF Base Tindal in the Northern Territory but operated remotely from RAAF Base Edinburgh in South Australia.

Sources - ABC News by defence correspondent Andrew Greene (article); ADF, Defence Dept image by Kate Czerny

Former prime minister Tony Abbott announcing the Triton drone acquisition in 2014. (Supplied ADF)



MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL



All I Want For Christmas is
 -YOU-
 MONEY

Source - pinterest, happy holiday cards

MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL



SANTA PARKS HIS SLEIGH ON THE ROUGH SIDE OF TOWN.



List I Must Make

Twice Must Check



WHAT DO YOU MEAN

SANTA'S GOT ENOUGH REINDEER



WRECK THE TREE AND BLAME THE DOGGIES

FA LA LA LA LA LA LA LA LA!



FROSTY GETS CAUGHT PICKING HIS NOSE



I'LL HAVE FOUR CALLING BIRDS, THREE FRENCH HENS, TWO TURTLE DOWNS, AND A PARTRIDGE... HELD THE PEAR TREE...



I hate when the elves help decorate the tree.



WHAT DO YOU MEAN GET DOWN? YOU SAID I WAS AN ANGEL.

Post 9/11, Afghanistan and Iraq

Following the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington on 11 September 2001, US President George W. Bush declared a "war on terror". Australia invoked the ANZUS treaty to support the US effort, and Australian military personnel joined the forces of "the coalition of the willing". Australia was among the first nations to pledge its support for the US-led multi-national coalition against terrorism. Coalition forces began military operations in Afghanistan against al Qaeda and the ruling Taliban regime. For years the latter had been providing a safe haven for al Qaeda and other terrorist networks.

Australia's military commitment to the war on terror and radical extremism began on 11 October 2001 with Operation Slipper. From then until April 2002, Australian SAS squadrons participated in operations in the mountainous regions south of Kabul, Afghanistan, conducting reconnaissance and surveillance and searching for Taliban and al Qaeda fighters and their bases. Their capabilities and professionalism earned them high praise from American commanders. The war paused inconclusively in mid-2002, as the United States became focused on Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq.



The attacks on New York and Washington on 11 September 2001 were audacious, cruel, and hideously successful acts of calculated terrorism.
- Prime Minister John Howard

United Airlines Flight 175 hits the southern tower of the World Trade Centre in New York City, 11 September 2001.

Wikimedia Commons.

Hussein had long flouted the United Nations Security Council resolutions, imposed following the Gulf War in 1991, that required him to abandon his regime's stockpile of biological and chemical weapons. As the dictator became increasingly belligerent, the United States grew more concerned that he continued to possess weapons of mass destruction and posed a threat to regional and global security in the post-9/11 world. Australia joined the US-led coalition that invaded Iraq on 19 March 2003. Members of 1 SAS Squadron fired some of the first shots of the war. Air force and navy elements also participated in the invasion. Within three weeks coalition forces had seized Baghdad and Hussein's brutal dictatorship was overthrown. However, no weapons of mass destruction were found. The Australian government's decision to join the "coalition of the willing" divided opinion in Australia. Australian forces remained in Iraq until 2009.



Left - An F/A-18A Hornet of No. 75 Squadron RAAF at Al Udeid Airbase in Qatar, April 2003, as part of Operation Falconer. Photographer by David Dare-Perker.



Right - Afghan women at Jabel Os Sansi, north of Kabul, Afghanistan, 1995. Photographer Stephen Dupont.

Post 9/11, Afghanistan and Iraq

Post-invasion, the coalition conducted a difficult nation-building and counter-insurgency campaign to prevent Iraq from sliding into civil war. In addition to security detachments in Baghdad for Australian diplomats at the national headquarters, from July 2003 an Australian army training team began to train Iraqi soldiers and in April 2005 a task group was deployed to southern Iraq to protect a Japanese engineer construction unit.

Australian forces returned to Afghanistan in September 2005. For the next eight years their efforts were focused on helping to secure and stabilise Uruzgan Province in southern Afghanistan against Taliban and militant insurgencies, and supporting the Afghan government. Australia's commitment became part of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force. Australia's Special Operation Forces in Uruzgan maintained pressure on insurgent and terrorist networks by identifying and targeting leaders and key individuals, as well as supporting anti-narcotic operations. They also helped to develop the Afghan National Security Forces.



Left - An Australian Special Forces patrol from Task Force 64 at the Al Asad Air Base in western Iraq, during Operation Falconer, April 2003. Photographer Sgt. W. Guthrie. Image courtesy of Department of Defence.
Right - An Australian SASR patrol from SOTG-10 make their way through the desert of Uruzgan province, Afghanistan, October 2009. Photographer LS Paul Berry. Image courtesy of Department of Defence.

In addition to special operation forces, between 2008 and 2008 Australia committed a Reconstruction Task Force to Uruzgan to help construct schools, medical facilities, bridges, and patrol bases, while training Afghan youths in carpentry and other trades. From late 2008 Australia's military focus shifted to mentoring Afghan forces through the Mentoring and Reconstruction Task Force and, from 2010, through the Mentoring Task Force.

Operation Slipper ended in 2014. However, Australian Defence Force personnel remain there until earlier this year and in the Middle East region. These include Australian personnel deployed as part of Operation Okra, training Iraqi forces to combat radical extremism in Iraq and Syria.

Regardless of who you are or where you were, September 11 2001 is date no doubt etched into memory. It was a day that changed the world; and its effects, varied and diverse, was felt by all Australians.

A combat engineer from Mentoring Team Delta patrols through a creek bed near Patrol Base Razaq in July 2010. Photographer Gary Remage.



Sources - Images and narrative from Australian War Memorial presentation

Australia carries out joint military drills with Philippines amid tensions with China in disputed seas

Australian and Philippines armed forces are carrying out air assault training and practicing re-taking an island from a hostile enemy in a series of joint drills in the South China Sea.

Supported by the United States, this is the first time the Commonwealth nation has offered military training and support to the Philippines against a backdrop of tensions between the Philippines and China. It comes after the US, Japan and Australian military planned a joint navy drill in the region earlier this month following what has been reported as rising aggression from China in the disputed seas around the Philippines. More than 2,000 personnel from both nations have taken part in various training exercises, including amphibious landing and air assault drills during Exercise Alon held at Antonio Bautista Naval Base, Palawan.

Alon is a bilateral amphibious training activity which includes air, maritime amphibious and follow-on land operations exercises. The training was observed by the President of the Republic of the Philippines Bongbong Marcos and the Deputy Prime Minister of Australia MP Richard Marles. The Australian MP said they "share a firm commitment to a peaceful, stable and prosperous region".



Australian troops trained alongside Philippine soldiers on Exercise Alon (Picture: Australian Army Twitter).

In a statement, MP Marles said: "(August 25) at Zambales, we observed joint amphibious activities which showed how far we have come to draw our militaries even closer together. Indo-Pacific Endeavour 2023 in the Philippines was supported by the United States Marine Corps, which demonstrated the value of partners working together to achieve mutual objectives".

"We agreed on the importance of all states operating safely and professionally, while respecting and adhering to international law, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and we reaffirmed our strong support of the 2016 South China Sea Arbitral Tribunal Award. We recommitted to planning bilateral joint patrols in the South China Sea and the West Philippine Sea and other areas of mutual interest".

Capt Juanie Lena

MREB has MRE soldiers from the ADF, Philippines and US conducted an air assault near Rizal, the Philippines, during Exercise Alon as part of Indo-Pacific Endeavour.

Using a combination of air, sea, and land actions, with support from the US Marine Corps, the exercise began on August 20 with insertion of ground combat elements via MV-22B Osprey from MREB-11, launched from HMAS Gulburne.

Close air support was provided by RAAF E-7A Wedgetail and F-35A Lightning II aircraft.

A helicopter assault force then established a link with the 3rd Philippine Marine Bde to occupy the Punta Daga Airfield, and set up a forward armory and refuelling point.

On August 21, a joint raid was conducted at Tarompinas Airfield by the combined forces, also with close air support.

Lt-Col Nevil A Gallucci, commander of the Philippines landing force, said the exercise demonstrated the defence forces' collective strength to face any challenge.

"Only together, with our combined capabilities, equipment and soldiers can we promote security and stability in our region," Lt-Col Gallucci said.

"It's about unity and collaboration with our partners, that is why we are here."

The event marked the first major training serial of the bilateral cooperation between the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the ADF as part of Indo-Pacific Endeavour 2023.

Commander landing force of the Australian Amphibious Force Col Douglas Paddy said the activity was a tremendous success.

"I'm very impressed with the degree of integration and partnership I've seen on this exercise," Col Paddy said.

"We came together less than two weeks ago, and then we were able to conduct a complex multinational air assault."

"We never do things alone, we always need a partner."

"Young Australians, Filipinos and US marines will remember this for the rest of their lives."



Lt Nevil A Gallucci, of TMAR, takes cover behind a wall during the air assault.

Australia carries out joint military drills with Philippines amid tensions with China in disputed seas

An Australian Army M1A1 Abrams tank and Armed Forces of the Philippines amphibious assault vehicles worked alongside each other during a combined amphibious assault as part of Exercise Alon at Zambales in the Philippines.

A troop of M1A1 Abrams main battle tanks from the 2nd Cavalry Regiment were embarked in HMAS Canberra for Indo-Pacific Endeavour (IPE), which included Exercise Alon. Commander Ground Combat Element Lieutenant Colonel Brent Hughes said the Australian and Philippines forces, with support from the United States Marine Corps, conducted a combined joint force entry operation during the amphibious assault exercise.

Hundreds of soldiers and marines, with their vehicles, were projected from Canberra into the area of operations by surface and air, demonstrating the interoperability between the combined force.

Tank Troop Leader Lieutenant Harry Selmes, from Bathurst, NSW, said the tank was taken ashore via Mexefiote landing craft. "At 65 tonnes, they're heavy. The Mexefiote is just one of the many landing craft available to project forces ashore during amphibious operations. It was great to be able to demonstrate its capability at Zambales," Lieutenant Selmes said.

The Army is moving quickly to procure new littoral manoeuvre vessels as part of the Land Project 8170. The vessels will have the ability to project soldiers and armoured and unarmoured vehicles ashore independently, or as a part of an amphibious task group.

Last year, as part of IPE, the ADF embarked two Boxer combat reconnaissance vehicles with the Australian Amphibious Force in HMAS Adelaide.

This is not the first time Australian tanks have been deployed in the region. During Operation Oboe in 1945, tanks were pivotal to the liberation of Borneo. Years later in Vietnam, tanks proved themselves to be a vital element of the combined-arms team.

The concept of combined arms, where combat arms are mutually supported by one another, has been practised by the Army since World War 2. The Grant tank helped turn the tide at Buna and Sanananda in 1943 and 1944; the Matilda tank was well suited to the close jungle combat at Balikpapan in 1945; and the Centurion tank proved to be the point of difference at the Battle of Binh Ba in 1969. In these examples, tanks, infantry, artillery and engineers fought together in complex terrain, often thick jungle or urban centres.

Lieutenant Selmes said they were life-savers. "There's a view that tanks are too big, that they're not able to operate in close, complex terrain. The opinion is they won't be needed, that a lighter force is better," Lieutenant Selmes said. "But when tanks are present on the battlefield, particularly in complex terrain, they save lives. They can have a massive and decisive effect. The basic concept of the tank hasn't changed - they are mobile, protected, with a large armament, which means they act as a force multiplier. The tank brings decisive firepower to the battlefield. They are the kings of close combat. Like anything in Army, we work best when we are employed as part of a combined-arms team, with infantry and artillery. That's why it's great to be here working with the Armed Forces of the Philippines. We bring the heavy armour to the table in this exercise. Being a tank commander has always been my dream. To so quickly be on an exercise overseas is really exciting for me and all the team."

A ground combat element made up of ADF personnel, US Marines and Armed Forces of the Philippines soldiers on completion of a combined amphibious assault exercise during Exercise Alon in the Philippines.

Photo: Lance Corporal Riley Blennerhasset



Source - Defence website; Capt Joanne Laps - Army News

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Australian War Stories

Candid and rare photos of Diggers in WWI show what life was really like

More than a dozen candid and rare photos of Australian soldiers heading to war have emerged, showing what life was really like.

Australia's involvement with the Gallipoli Campaign began in late 1914 when the first contingent of Australian troops left Albany.

From enlistment and training to embarkation and action, a timeline of any serving soldier and volunteer can be tracked through the online site.

"When Britain declared war on Germany on August 4, 1914, there was no question whether Australians would take part," historian Elizabeth Heffernan said.

Indeed one recruitment poster, featured on the new site, captures the illusion of a working holiday, offering those who sign up: "Free tour to Great Britain and Europe. The chance of a lifetime."

Many of the 30,000 young men who left Albany, Western Australia, on November 1, 1914 on the maiden war voyage had never left their home state before, let alone the country.

"Conditions on board the troopships could be tough: below decks it was often cramped and sweltering. On the SS Athenic, 500 soldiers shared only five washbasins," Ms Heffernan said.

"Men slept on the upper decks to escape the heat. Seasickness and other illnesses such as influenza, meningitis and pneumonia were rife. Some of the men and horses died."

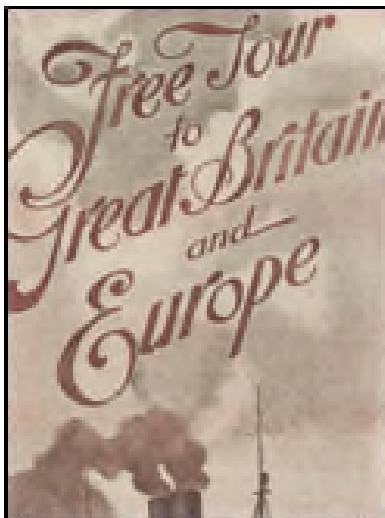
To allay the boredom, they played cards and sport, whistled, held impromptu concerts and even ran potato sack races.

The first convoy docked in Alexandria, Egypt, on December 3, 1914.

"The men were moved into camps in the shadows of the pyramids, spending much of their free time when not training as tourists in the desert land," Ms Heffernan said.

"Heady with the sense of adventure, some even ran riot in Cairo, earning infamy among the locals, the British authorities, and the newspapers back home."

Here, we snapshot the frivolity and mateship of our brave representatives on their ultimate, fateful march towards the Ottoman Empire.



Picture: State Library NSW

Picture:
State
Library
NSW



Left - Chance of a lifetime: Early recruitment posters advertised the adventure of war, appealing to many young men who had never even left their home state, let alone the country. This poster promised a grand tour of Britain and Europe to all those who enlisted. An early recruitment posters advertised the adventure of war. Picture: State Library NSW

Top right - "You'll Do Kangaroo": At the outbreak of war, Britain was considered the mother country by many Australians. New recruits leapt at the chance to honour both King and country, while also making the young nation of Australia proud.

Bottom right - Fit for service: New recruits underwent a thorough medical assessment including minimum height and chest measurement. They were examined for 'BC' or 'D' tattoos on their skin - British army markings that stood for 'bad character' and 'deserter'.

Australian War Stories



Above left - Ready for action: Soldiers trained at camps across Australia before embarking for the front. They were given basic military training, including how to use rifles and other small arms. Here soldiers at Blackboy Hill in Western Australia smile for the camera holding mugs of chicken stew, ready for the adventure of war.



Above right - The longest journey to war: Ships from the first convoy to leave Australia sailed from King George's Sound at Albany, Western Australia, on 1 November 1914. It was to be a months-long voyage to Europe before they were rerouted to Egypt to face the Ottomans.



Above left - A sight like no other: Thirty-eight transports from Australia and New Zealand made up the first convoy, escorted by four warships. Even for those soldiers who had been at sea before, it was a majestic sight and experience like no other.



Above right - Bound for battle: HMAT Euripides was one of the first convoy's 38 transports. It carried a portion of the 30,000 Anzac troops, 11,000 horses and 25 nurses bound for Egypt in that first contingent. The journey took just over a month.



Above left - Life on board: Troops were expected to attend training, drills, exercises and lectures while on board the ship. The busy schedule was designed to alleviate boredom and maintain morale. Here men of the 5th Battalion undergo a kit inspection on HMAT Orvieta.



Above right - In the ring: Sports were a favourite pastime for troops on board the ships, though there were few options with the conditions so cramped. One crowd-pleaser were wrestling and boxing matches, such as this "friendly spar" on HMAT Euripides.

Continued on next 2 pages

Australian War Stories

Continued from previous 2 pages



Above left - Just a trim: Soldiers were in charge of their own hygiene and appearance in the AIF. Here, men on board HMAT Euripides have opened an impromptu barber shop on the upper decks. Often they were employed as barbers before the war and put their skills to good use.

Above right - Lighthorsemen's best friend: Of the 11,000 horses who travelled in the first convoy, 8000 were Australian, typically the favoured Australian Water breed. Some 224 died during the voyage, far fewer than anticipated, due to the high standard of care the men performed for their charges.



Above left - Anzac girls: Twenty-five Australian Army Nursing Service women travelled on board seven ships in the first convoy. Here sisters Alice Gordon King and Janet Radcliffe pose for an informal portrait on SS Geelong with members of the Tasmanian infantry.

Above right - Bonds of friendship: Mateship and camaraderie flourished in the tight conditions of the troopships. Many of these men would serve together in Egypt and Gallipoli, then later Belgium and France. Here troops have a laugh on deck of the Oryzeta, watched by smiling officers.



Above left - Passing the time: Officers and chaplains organised games on board the troopships to help pass the time, such as potato sack races and cards. Here, soldiers on the Rangatira enjoy a lighthearted moment of wheelbarrow racing on the upper deck.

Above right - A touch of home: Horses were the only animals officially on board the troopships but some soldiers smuggled in unit mascots too. This wallaby was likely the mascot for the 7th Battery, 3rd Field Artillery Brigade on the SS Rangatira and reminded the men of the home they had left behind.

Australian War Stories



Above left - In foreign fields: A month after leaving home, Australians found themselves not in Europe, as they had imagined, but rerouted to Egypt to meet a new enemy, Turkey. Few had left the country before and even fewer had laid eyes on Egypt. Here soldiers on board the Wiltshire take in the strange and wonderful sights.

Above right - Landfall: The first convoy docked in Alexandria on 3 December 1914. The men on board had no idea of the terrible war that awaited them. Here soldiers from the Australian Army Service Corps disembark from the *Omrah*.



Above left - In the shadow of the pyramids: Between their arrival in December 1914 and journey to Gallipoli in April 1915, soldiers trained in camps outside Alexandria and Cairo such as Mena Camp, pictured here with the 4th Battalion. The environment was both thrilling and foreign.

Above right - Soldier-tourists: When not training in Egypt, the Australians took in the sights. They toured the Great Pyramids and the Sphinx and explored all Cairo had to offer. Here men of the 11th Battalion pose for a portrait in front of the iconic statue in January 1915.



Left - Bushmen in the desert: Men of the Australian Light Horse would spend most of their war in the Middle East. Colloquially known as "bush men", they first enjoyed the sights of Egypt just as much as the infantry, before the realities of desert combat sunk in. Here members are pictured on their horses in Cairo.

Sources - DAILY TELEGRAPH ARTICLE 2022, News Corp Australia Network by [Adella Besini](#)

Pictures - Picture: State Library NSW as indicated (recruiting pics) and all other pictures from the [Australian War Memorial](#)

Taipans Grounded

About 400 Australian aerospace support workers are facing redundancy after a fleet of MRH-90 Taipan helicopters has been retired early, the head of the European manufacturer says.

Defence Minister Richard Marles says the first of the replacement Black Hawks have arrived. He confirmed on Friday these military helicopters will not return to flying operations before their planned withdrawal date of December 2024.

The decision comes after one of the Taipans crashed during a military training exercise in Queensland's Whitsundays, killing four defence personnel.

NHI Industries (NHI) President, Axel Aloccio, said support networks would no longer be needed as a result of the fleet's withdrawal.

"The immediate concern is to support the 400 or so workers in Australian aerospace who will be impacted by this decision because we were organising ourselves to support the Australian fleet until the end of next year," he said. "With this decision to anticipate the withdrawal of the NH90 by one year, this is going to impact immediately those 400 workers who will be made redundant as a result."

An Australian defence ministry spokesperson said: "The MRH-90 Taipan workforce is highly skilled and defence is working with industry partners to ensure they are supported through the capability transitional period."

Meanwhile, Mr Aloccio rebuffed concerns that the decision to stop flying the helicopters was linked to a safety issue following the crash in the Whitsundays. "At this stage of the investigation no particular technical issue has been identified and we do not believe that the safety of the NH90 is at stake," he said.

Australia's decision to stop flying Taipans early is the latest setback for the European NH90 programme after Norway and Sweden announced plans to cancel purchases.

The Australia-led investigation into July's Taipan crash is set to last well into 2024.

MRH90 Timeline



April 2010 (above left)
In 2010, the ADF grounds 11 of its new MRH-90 helicopters after one suffers an engine failure near Adelaide. At the time, 46 MRH-90s had been ordered for the Australian Army and Navy to replace Sea King and Black Hawk helicopters.



June 2019 (left)
ABC obtains a sensitive "projects of concern" report, listing the MRH-90 helicopters among the worst-performing military acquisitions. The report says the fleet is limited on certain missions because it could not shut down main engines.



The MRH-90 Taipan fleet has been retired 15 months early.

Taipans Grounded



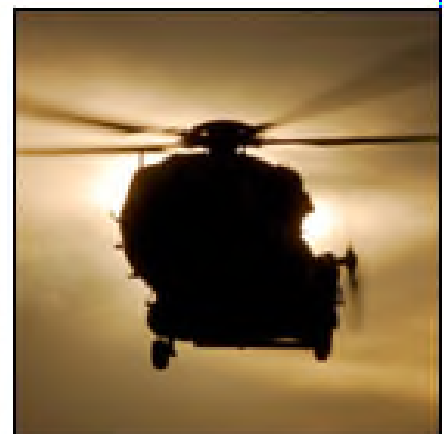
Oct 2020 (above)

During a Senate Estimates hearing, officials confirm the helicopter's door was too narrow to allow its gun to fire while troops were descending. They also hear the cargo hook on the Navy's MRH90s is an "ongoing problem".



June 2021 (above)

The ADF grounds its 47 multi-role Taipans for weeks, in a move the military describes as a "safety precaution". The issue relates to the application of the helicopter's maintenance policy in the helicopter's IT support system.



Dec 2021 (above)

PM Scott Morrison announces the ADF will ditch its entire fleet of MRH90s a decade earlier than scheduled. They will be replaced with new Black Hawks and Seahawks imported from the United States.

March 2023 (right)

Ten ADF personnel, including special forces soldiers, are forced to ditch into Jervis Bay. Eyewitnesses report seeing sparks at the top of the rotor blades and an explosion before the helicopter comes down.



Left - Army's first new Black Hawks arrive

Two new Black Hawks arrive in Australia, which will eventually form part of a 40-strong helicopter fleet to replace the army's troubled Taipans that remain grounded following last month's crash in Queensland.

"Today's announcement does not presuppose or in any way suggest the outcome of the investigations into the tragic incident," Mr Marles said on Friday.

"The MRH-90 has been an important capability for our country and Defence Force, and I recognise the hard work of the hundreds of people who dedicated themselves to acquiring, operating and sustaining the aircraft.

"Given we were due to retire the aircraft at the end of next year anyway, there is now no world in which we would be flying the Taipans a gain."

The Taipan fleet was grounded multiple times over malfunctions in the past, including after an incident in March this year when 10 ADF personnel were forced to ditch into water at Jervis Bay, New South Wales.

Mr Marles said on Friday that the first of the 40 Black Hawks that would replace the Taipans had arrived. Shadow Foreign Affairs Minister Simon Birmingham told Sky News on Friday that the coalition supported the acquisition and transition to the Black Hawks.

Source - ABC News wire, no name or acknowledgement of individual photographers or writers, Sept 30 2023

Colonial period, 1788–1901

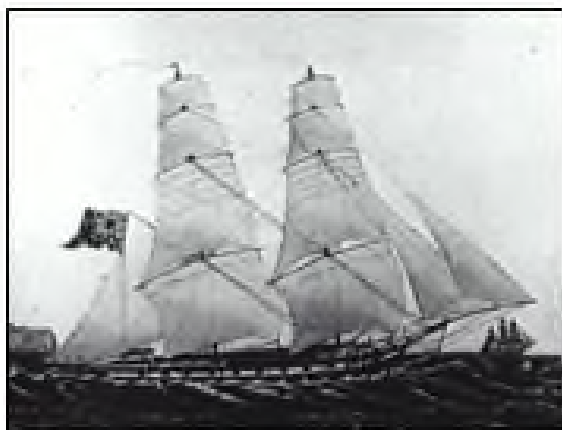
British settlement of Australia began as a penal colony governed by a captain of the Royal Navy. Until the 1850s, when local forces began to be recruited, British regular troops garrisoned the colonies with little local assistance. From 1788 marines guarded English settlements at Sydney Cove and Norfolk Island; they were relieved in 1790 by a unit specifically recruited for colonial service, and in 1810 the 73rd Regiment of Foot became the first line regiment to serve in Australia. From then until 1870, 25 British infantry regiments and several smaller artillery and engineer units were stationed in the colonies. One role of the troops was to guard Australia against external attack, but their main job was to maintain civil order, particularly against the threat of convict uprisings, and to suppress the resistance of the Aboriginal population to British settlement.

With the end of convict transportation to New South Wales in 1840, the need for military forces diminished and troop strength began to decline, particularly as British troops were required in the first Anglo-Maori wars in New Zealand and as colonial police forces were formed. After the last British regiment left in 1870 the colonies were obliged to assume responsibility for their own defence. Only rarely during their time in Australia did British troops fire upon fellow Europeans. In March 1804 British regulars suppressed a convict rebellion near Castle Hill, and in 1829 soldiers were involved in putting down the "Ribbon Gang" outbreak near Bathurst. In an incident that took place after transportation had ended, British troops, along with police, battled insurgent miners at the Eureka Stockade, on the Ballarat goldfields, on 4 December 1854.

British soldiers based in Australia who did partake in military operations were more likely to have fought across the Tasman in the Anglo-Maori wars of the 1840s and 1860s. Resulting from the continuing expansion of European settlers onto Maori land and the colonial government's determination to crush native independence, the first war took place in 1845–48. With insufficient troops in New Zealand to meet the threat, the 58th Regiment of Foot, then based in Australia, was dispatched in February 1845, soon to be followed by further troops. Fighting died down after 1848 but flared again in 1860 before a truce was declared and peace returned.

By 1863 hostilities had reignited, and New Zealand's colonial authorities requested further assistance from Australia. A contingent of British troops was dispatched, along with Her Majesty's Colonial Steam Sloop Victoria. In July 1863 British troops invaded the Waikato area and news of the continuing campaign spread through the Australian colonies. Some 2,500 volunteers offered their services on the promise of settlement on confiscated Maori land by New Zealand recruiters; most joined the Waikato Militia regiments, others became scouts and bush guerrillas in the Company of Forest Rangers. Few of these volunteers were involved in major battles, and fewer than 20 were killed.

Despite the preponderance of British troops in the Australian colonies, colonial military forces were maintained from as early as December 1788, when the commandant of Norfolk Island, Phillip Gidley King, ordered his free male settlers (numbering six) to practise musketry on Saturdays. The first military unit raised on the Australian mainland appeared in September 1800, when Governor Hunter asked 100 free male settlers in Sydney and Parramatta to form Loyal Associations (English volunteer units raised to put down civil unrest) and practice military drills in case the Irish convicts rebelled. Six years later Governor King recruited six ex-convicts as the nucleus of a military bodyguard, creating the first full-time military unit to be raised in Australia. Both these groups joined British regulars in suppressing the Castle Hill uprising.



Left - Starboard side representation of the brig sloop HMS Pelorus, which was based at Sydney from 1838 to 1839 **Centre** - New Zealand during the New Zealand Wars - North Island **Right** - An officer of the 50th Regiment of Foot who was stationed at Victoria Barracks, Sydney, between 1866 to 1869, following service in the New Zealand wars. Insignia on cuff and collar indicates the rank of captain and the medals are for service in the Crimean War.

Colonial period, 1788–1901

An officer of the 50th Regiment of Foot who was stationed at Victoria Barracks, Sydney, between 1868 to 1869, following service in the New Zealand wars. Insignia on cuff and collar indicates the rank of captain and the medals are for service in the Crimean War.

Not until 1854 were volunteer corps and militia again formed in the Australian colonies, but news of war between Britain and Russia in the Crimea led to the establishment of volunteer corps in some colonies and the formation of informal rifle clubs in others. When the Crimean War ended in 1856 volunteer units faded, to be revived in 1859 when it appeared that Napoleon III was preparing to invade England. By early 1860 most suburbs and towns in Australia supported a volunteer unit, usually a rifle corps.

An informal group photograph of spectators and competitors taken during a rifle shooting competition between ten men of the Hobart Town Volunteers Artillery and ten men from the First Rifles. The men are all holding pattern 1853 .577 inch Enfield rifles. Tasmania, 17 October 1863.

For the rest of the century volunteer corps became more organised, with instruction duties placed in the hands of professional soldiers. In the early 1890s several thousand citizen soldiers were mobilised in eastern Australia to assist regulars and police to maintain order during the maritime and shearing strikes of the early 1890s. In 1899 trained citizen soldiers were given the opportunity to test their skills in the Boer War, to which the colonial governments, and later the Commonwealth, sent contingents. The administration of colonial military forces passed to the Commonwealth on 1 March 1901, following federation.

Although much of the military training undertaken by volunteers in the colonies was aimed at meeting external threats, European settlement was accompanied by a protracted and undeclared war against Australia's Indigenous inhabitants. Fighting was localised and sporadic, following the frontiers of European settlement across the continent and continuing in remote areas of central and Western Australia until the 1930s. British soldiers (as distinct from armed police and civilians) became involved only rarely, notably during the period of martial law in Tasmania between 1828 and 1832, and in New South Wales in the mid-1820s and late 1830s. Military authorities did not usually regard Aborigines as posing sufficient threat to warrant the expense of committing military forces to pursue them, and most of the fighting was conducted by the settlers, assisted by police.

The conflict between Europeans and Aboriginal Australians followed a broadly similar pattern. At first, the Aborigines tolerated the settlers and sometimes welcomed them. But when it became apparent that the settlers and their livestock had come to stay, competition for access to the land developed and friction between the two ways of life became inevitable. As the settlers' behaviour became unacceptable to the Indigenous population, individuals were killed over specific grievances; these killings were then met with reprisals from the settlers, often on a scale out of proportion to the original incident. Occasionally Aborigines attacked Europeans in open country, resulting in encounters somewhat akin to conventional battles, usually won by the Europeans. Resistance was more successful when Aborigines employed stealth and ambush in rugged country. In addition to guerrilla tactics, Aborigines also engaged in a form of economic warfare, killing livestock, burning property, attacking drays which carried supplies, and, in Western Australia in the 1890s, destroying telegraph lines.

It is estimated that some 2,500 European settlers and police died in this conflict. For the Aboriginal inhabitants the cost was far higher: about 20,000 are believed to have been killed in the wars of the frontier, while many thousands more perished from disease and other unintended consequences of settlement. Aboriginal Australians were unable to restrain – though in places they did delay – the tide of European settlement; although resistance in one form or another never ceased, the conflict ended in their dispossession.



Left - An informal group photograph of spectators and competitors taken during a rifle shooting competition between ten men of the Hobart Town Volunteers Artillery and ten men from the First Rifles. The men are all holding pattern 1853 .577 inch Enfield rifles.

Tasmania, 17 October 1863.

Right - Three officers of the South Australian Company, c. 1898, wearing full dress. The helmet with feather hackle was worn in India and Australia in place of the traditional feather bonnet, as a concession to the climate. In the centre is Lieutenant James Stevenson-Black. The uniform he is wearing is held by the Memorial.

Source article and images - Australian War Memorial

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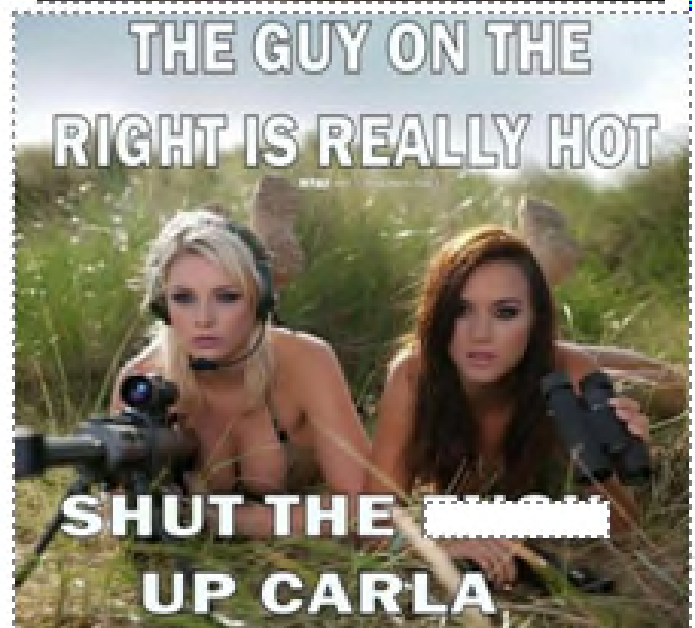
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Source - Honesthistory.net