

Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia Victorian Branch Inc

FSB - VIC



AUTUMN EDITION ~ 2008



Another MIA home: Lance Corporal John Gillespie finally arrives home at Point Cook RAAF Base, 36 years after the RAAF helicopter he was in was shot down during a rescue mission in the Long Hai hills, South Vietnam on April 17, 1971. 3 home - 2 to go.

ALSO
IN
THIS
ISSUE:

- ★Executive Reports.
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- ★Tassie Retreat.
- ★Viet Vets Family Study
- ★VVCS Programs.
- ★VVAA Sub Branches.



Honour the Dead but Fight Like Hell for the Living

VVAA Victorian State Branch Executive

STATE PRESIDENT	Robert (Bob) ELWORTHY
STATE VICE PRESIDENT	James SADDINGTON
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VICTORIAN BRANCH WELFARE OFFICER	Kevin HUNTER
VVAA BRANCH HON. SOLICITOR	Peter LIEFMAN
STATE OFFICE MANAGER	Maurie BENSON

VVAA Victorian Branch ~ State Office

Address: VVAA Victorian Branch Anzac House L3/4 Collins St MELBOURNE VIC 3000	Phone: (03) 9655 5588	Office Hours: 1000 > 1400 Hrs Mon - Fri
	Fax: (03) 9655 5582	Newsletter Email: editor@vvaavic.org.au
Web Site: www.vvaavic.org.au	Email: secretary@vvaavic.org.au	

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Welcome to the autumn edition of FSB-Vic, your newsletter. I hope you find this newsletter informative and interesting. My report to the 2008 AGM is included in the newsletter.

For the second time in less than 12 months I have attended a service for the return home of one of our brothers, MIA for so long. This time it was Pte John Gillespie.

A detailed report is included later on, but I provide a few personal observations. It was a moving experience: a giant Hercules transport sitting silently in the rain at Point Cook as young soldiers, not even born when Gillespie died, gently carried his casket from the plane to the beat of a muffled drum. After a short but solemn service, including the posthumous award of the ASM, the young soldiers delivered the casket into the hands of Gillespie's Vietnam Veteran service mates for the last part of the journey - finally he was home.

So far so good with the new government that has delivered on some key issues-and I remain confident that we will be able to work constructively with the new minister for the betterment of veterans and towards satisfying our other manifesto priorities. Already, requests for information and input to planning processes emanating from the Minister for Veterans' Affairs office has put added pressure on the Association, and I am pleased to report that the National Advisory Group process that we pushed for is meeting the challenge. I encourage all members to consider being a part of the process, as I see the NAG process being truly representative of our "bottom up" approach to doing business

I note that a number of sub-branches are struggling to fill committee positions, and your executive has had the same problem as well. I simply encourage all members to please consider helping out. We have some important work to do

now and into the future for our mates and our children, and also in the time that our association continues to exist in its current form we need to put in place measures to look after our members well into the future. On that note, a special thank you to all committee members across the state for your commitment to veterans.

Grass roots welfare and the children's health study will be key themes for the remainder of the year- we will all need to play our part. Welfare is what the VVAA is renowned for and what we do best, together we have the chance to really make a difference in our own lives and the lives of our veteran mates. Finally, the children's health study is underway and I ask that all veteran families take the time to have a close look at the DVA website-details in the newsletter-and encourage each other to take part. The success of the study rests on the recruitment of enough veterans, children and other comparison groups.

There is more news on the museum elsewhere in the newsletter, but I would like to report here that the paperwork is in place to establish a Trust to manage the museum into the future: John Methven, Peter Liefman, Gary Elliott, George Logan from the RSL and I will be the inaugural trustees; it is a responsibility that we all take very seriously.

In closing, there are still great challenges before us, not the least of which is our advancing age. I never fail to be amazed at the dedication of our wonderful group of volunteers who rise to the challenge at sub-branches, at welfare centres, in pension and welfare offices, through educating the young and minding the museum, training future pension and welfare officers, fighting for veterans at VRB and AAT hearings and all those others who just quietly go about their tasks on behalf of veterans-we are all in your debt. Keep well.

Bob Elworthy

FROM THE SECRETARY

Firstly, thank you for electing me as your State Secretary for the second year running, and congratulations to those in our midst who have also been elected to State Branch and Sub-Branche (SB) executive positions. Please remember that you are not on your own and there is plenty of help around – just ask.

I add that I am looking for an Assistant State Secretary and would be happy to talk to anyone about the position. You do not necessarily need a heap of administrative experience – just the willingness to give it a go!

There are many issues that the Association in Victoria deals with and whilst there is a State Executive, the SB's quite clearly have a say in things at the quarterly State Council meetings and individual members also have a say in things at SB level. If there is an issue, don't hatch it and get it out in the open. WE NEED TO WORK AS A TEAM!

The Museum is getting along very well and regardless of it doing well, your continued support is still needed. Remember Museum Day on 11 May 2008, the Minister for Veterans' Affairs will be there to officially open the "Garden of

Reflection" on the day.

Communication works both ways and whilst most of the Sub-Branche are "on the ball", some appear to leave the communication working one way. If the Sub-Branche is requested to provide information on a particular matter, please provide a response. A point in illustration is the requirement for Sub-Branche to forward the minutes of their respective AGM's to the State Secretary.

You would be aware that Dick Culliford passed away in February, he will be very sadly missed. In another instance, a veteran passed away with his personal affairs in a real mess – some of his mates said they knew of the issues but did nothing. The point in question is get to know your mates and assist wherever possible to ensure that he *and* his family get their just entitlements.

I look forward to working with you all during the 2008 year for the betterment of the Association and would be pleased to assist with any enquiries as appropriate.

Peter Bright

State Secretary

PEACEKEEPER MEMORIAL

Just like Vietnam Veterans did so long ago, the Australian Peacekeeper & Peacemaker Veterans' Assoc (APPVA) is seeking support for the construction of their National Memorial.

"We need members for the Australian Peacekeeping Memorial Project Committee (APMPC), in order to see successful completion of our National Memorial on ANZAC Parade in Canberra.

Any ESO and their members are cordially invited to help support this Project by becoming a member for just \$20 (Tax-Deductible).

Please help."

Paul Copeland,
National President,
Australian Peacekeeper & Peacemaker Veterans' Association Inc.

P.O. Box 552,
TORQUAY, VIC, 3228
AUSTRALIA
+61 3 5264 8244

E : president@peacekeepers.asn.au
W: www.peacekeepers.asn.au

"Looking After Our Own"

Honour the Dead but Fight Like Hell for the Living

VVAA STATE MANIFESTO

*(Authorised: State Council Meeting
– Sale, 4 August 2007)*

Disability Pension Payments

Arrest the erosion of the value of all levels of disability pension payments (general rate, intermediate rate, special (TPI) rate, EDA rate) and subsequent loss of earning/purchasing power caused by indexation methodology. Includes the abandonment of the split indexation of the Special (TPI) rate and catch-up payments where there has been financial detriment to veterans.

Children’s Health

Immediately commence a far-reaching and adequately funded study into the health of the children of Vietnam Veterans.

Mental Health

Provide better and simplified mental health assessment, treatment, and compensation regimes. Improve and simplify psychiatric condition acceptance procedures. Provide adequate funding to ensure eligible veterans have access to mental health professionals, mental health programs and facilities, including hospital beds.

Veteran Aged Care

Seek Government provided aged care facilities for veterans. Seek Government assistance with meeting the cost of entry into retirement village type accommodation.

Private Health Insurance for Carers

Given the Government’s current reluctance to budge on TPI payments and pharmaceuticals, we need to look for alternative ways of putting some value back into Veteran compensation payments.

Carers (whether in receipt of carers allowance or not) of Veterans to be recognized by Government

as providing a valuable service which in fact saves the Government significant funds by keeping Veterans at home and out of medical facilities. We will argue that a Veteran needs to provide private health insurance in order to ensure that the carer can remain available, and that this is a heavy financial burden. By providing private health insurance the Government is taking out cheap insurance so that a carer will be able to get immediate medical attention if needed and thus the Veteran may not need to be hospitalised - thus saving costs for the provision of medical services.

Medical and Dental Services

Ensure unrestricted access to medical, dental and allied services for entitled veterans. Adequately remunerate specialists thereby encouraging them to treat veterans. Extend gold card entitlements to spouses of gold card holders.

Pharmaceuticals

Provide free pharmaceuticals for entitled veterans.

Retrospective Awards

Conduct reviews into the lack of bravery awards made to Vietnam Conflict service personnel with the aim of retrospectively making appropriate awards, including allowing foreign awards to be recognized. Broaden the award of active service medals to include personnel who were engaged in certain logistic support and evacuation operations.

Rental Assistance

Current superannuation rules, increases in real estate prices and a tight rental market are all contributing to rising rental costs and a shortage of rental properties (some owners are selling their rental properties in order to take advantage of attractive super rules). Veterans in rental situations are under increasing pressure.

This matter has been raised with government before and rejected, however we must try again and look for a different approach.

VVAA STATE MANIFESTO ~ cont'd

Funeral Benefit

Increase the funeral benefit for all eligible veterans to at least \$4000.

Alternative Medicine and Health Services

Provide free access to alternative medicine and health services for gold card holders.

Legal Aid

Provide legal aid to Vietnam Veterans in all states through state legal aid commissions irrespective of the case.

Role of Carers

Give proper recognition to the role of carers of Vietnam Veterans. Provide funding and resources to allow access to community health facilities and adequate respite breaks.

War Graves

Maintain as official war graves, the graves of all Vietnam Veterans who died on active service and are buried in Australia, irrespective of whether the funeral was conducted privately or with military honours.

Counselling Access

Remove age and time limits for access to VVCS counselling services for children of Vietnam Veterans and divorcees.

Voluntary Work

Acknowledge the value of TPI veterans undertaking voluntary work.

Medal Issue

Immediately improve and adequately resource the medal issuing authority in order to overcome long delays in delivering service medals to eligible personnel.

CARRIAGE OF MEDALS ON AIRCRAFT

Following a recent enquiry through RAR Assoc QLD it was pointed out that court mounted medals with the rear brooch pin would be considered a weapon in accordance with Air Safety Regulations and could not be carried on board either with hand luggage or worn. They would be required to be checked in with luggage.

Subsequent enquiries to Qantas and Virgin, with Virgin responding as follows:

“....Service Medals would normally be prohibited as carry-on baggage, however, with Anzac Day fast approaching and having many Anzac's travelling with us, DOTARS have provided an exemption for guests flying with military medals.

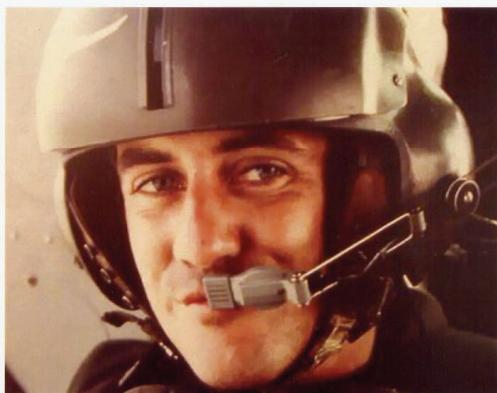
The Department will be issuing a circular shortly to screening authorities and airport operators which will provide guidance with guests carrying pinned medals. As a company we will be suggesting the use of a common sense, risk-based approach to screening a person wearing medals or carrying medals in hand luggage. Therefore, we are happy to advise that guests are certainly welcome to wear or carry their war medals as carry-on baggage....”

While it appears it is OK to wear/carry court mounted medals when flying, it would be a good idea to check with the airline first.

A Welcome Home ~ 36 years later

Giving thanks to God
for
the life and love
of

John Francis Gillespie



St Anthony's Church
Glenhuntly
December 22, 2007

Lance Corporal John Gillespie was just 24 years old and had a young wife and daughter at home when he died serving his country, killed during a rescue mission into enemy territory in which he was trapped by his legs under his burning helicopter after it was shot down. The rest of the crew escaped, but were unable to return to the crash site as North Vietnamese forces took control of the area soon after.

The 24 year old medical assistant returned to Australian soil on a Hercules to RAAF base Williams, Point Cook, met by family, comrades, members of the 1st Combat Services Support Battalion, veterans and the Minister for Veterans' Affairs Alan Griffin..His coffin was draped in the Australian flag, and troops formed a guard of honour.

Lance Cpl Gillespie's widow, Carmel Hendry, daughter Fiona Pike, two sisters and a brother were there, along with federal Veterans Affairs' Minister Alan Griffin, Vietnam veterans, and Australian Defence Force officials and personnel.

Ms Hendry said while the return of her husband's remains closed a chapter in the family's history, it would

herald a new beginning in which her daughter and her daughter's children would have a proper place to mourn and reflect on his life and ultimate sacrifice.

Ray Zegers, who served alongside Lance Cpl Gillespie as a port door gunner and survived the enemy attack that killed his comrade, said he remembered the crash as though it were yesterday.

"I had a feeling something was wrong," he recalled. "Unfortunately, something did occur. He had no chance whatsoever. "It was the second blast that hit us. That was the end. I can remember the pilot saying 'Hang on, we're going down'."

He said it was a huge relief to finally see his mate home after 36 years.

The recovery of Lance Cpl Gillespie's body was done as part of a long-standing mission by *Operation Aussies Home*, headed by Vietnam veteran Jim Bourke, after years of research, interviews with Australian and Vietnamese veterans, and trips into heavily mined jungle areas. LCPL Gillespie's body was the third to be flown home from Vietnam as part of *Operation Aussies Home*, and a search is in progress for another three lost Diggers.

Mr Bourke said the search had been painstaking but ended with the best possible outcome. "It feels really good to have this fella home," Mr Bourke said. "The country has got a moral obligation to look after the families of these men, and we owe them the respect of at least endeavouring to find them.

"The relief that the families get makes it all worthwhile," he said.

LCPL Gillespie was posthumously awarded the Australian Defence Medal and buried in a non-military funeral in Melbourne.



VIETNAM VETERANS NATIONAL MUSEUM

Full steam ahead! The Garden of Reflection was officially opened by the Minister for Veterans' Affairs in May. The garden provides a tranquil retreat for visitors to the museum and a place in which to reflect on service and sacrifice.

In April the Phillip Island RSL hosted a fund raising dinner for the museum. Entertainment was provided free by a range of entertainers including Normie Rowe, Marcie Jones, Lisa Edwards and Wendy Stapleton-what a show!

TOLL Racing, a major supporter of the museum having already donated \$20,000, matched that with another \$20,000 on the night from the proceeds of their annual charity golf day. Overall, the night raised about \$25,000.

At the Swan Hill state council meeting, the museum was presented with a large plaque bearing the VVAA crest from the SA Branch, and a donation of a deceased veterans' medals and other military artefacts-this was a particularly emotional occurrence and further acknowledgement that the museum is now being recognised as a spiritual home.

In April, the Minister for Veterans' Affairs officially unveiled a magnificent Roll of Hon-

our that had been presented to the museum by the National Servicemen's Association of Australia. The Honour Roll contains the names of all National Servicemen who died on active service during the Vietnam War conflict.

The Canberra bomber acquired by the museum will be progressively refurbished. To achieve this, sponsors will be sought from big business and other organisations with an interest in historical aircraft. The bomber engines have been removed to a workshop where they will be restored. One of the engines is the second Rolls Royce Avon engine produced, and in historical aircraft restoration and aircraft museum terms is priceless, as is the Canberra bomber, the only one in existence with the operational history of this particular aircraft.

Visitors continue to come in good numbers, and the museum is now catering for bus tours and group visits, including catering. Unit reunions are now including the museum on their visit schedule-and giving museum shop sales a real kick along!

Check out the TOLL Racing website at www.tollracing.com click on Charity Golf Day, check out the info there about the sponsorship and then on the golf day page click on Beneficiaries to read more about the sponsorship of the museum.

Congratulations to the Museum and its Team for receiving the award of Best Community Business at the Bass Coast Shire Business Awards 2008.

Museum Spokesman Gary Parker said "This should confirm that the faith placed in us to continue with the development of the Museum is justified.... Those that have assisted can be justifiably proud."

MUSEUM ON THE SCRUNGE

Anybody out there know a mate of a mate etc who might be able to source a canvas cover for a MK5 Inter.

The current one leaks like the old Army issue smocks tropical lightweight, rain attracting, soldiers for the use of one only.

Any ideas to Gary Parker at the Museum please (vvmuseum@nex.net.au or 5956 6400)

NATIONAL MUSEUM GARDEN OF REFLECTION



The Minister for Veterans Affairs Alan Griffin MP officially opened the Garden of Reflection which was consecrated as Holy Ground by Chaplain Lawrie Dawson.

Also on the day Keith Payne VC OAM presented Museum Sub Branch Life Membership Awards to John and Krishna Methven.

VVAA Museum Sub-Branch President Gary Parker, who was MC for the day, paid tribute to all those who have contributed effort and donations that have seen



the Museum develop as a unique and significant site for all Vietnam Veterans, families and friends.



Printer Add.

Honour the Dead but Fight Like Hell for the Living

NEW VVAA VIC STATE WEB SITE



Visual VOODOO
studios • melbourne

Visual Voodoo Studios

Sandhurst Business District

23 / 75 Herbert Road

Carrum Downs, VIC 3201

PH: +61 3 9017 3406

The new website is up and running-still a few bugs but looking good. The new website is much more user friendly and interesting, and we hope more informative.

One key inclusion is the new Honour Roll that was made possible by a grant from DVA from funds left over from VV Day 2006. The website sponsors, designers and hosts, Voodoo Visual Studios of Melbourne have done a great job and have been very generous with their time-we have received a huge bang for the bucks!

Len Barlow continues to be our website manager and Len has played a big part in the redevelopment of the site.

The screenshot shows the homepage of the VVAA Victorian Branch Incorporated website. At the top, there's a banner featuring the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia logo and the text "Welcome to Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia Victorian Branch Incorporated". Below the banner are four navigation links: "About Us", "Contact Us", "Newsletter", and "Events Calendar". On the left side, there's a vertical sidebar with links to "Return Home", "Honour Roll", "State Directory", "State Manifesto", "Project ASIST", "Crisis Services", and "VVAA Vic Branch Constitution". The main content area features a large image of a helicopter and the text "A total of 508 Australian personnel died in active service". Below this, there are two buttons: "Victorian Newsletter" and "Join our Mailing List". A small note says "Download the FSB VIC -" followed by an Adobe PDF icon. To the right, there's a sidebar titled "Latest News" with three entries: "09/08/08 State Council Meeting", "17/05/08 State Council Meeting", and "27/03/08 VVAA Vic Launches refurbished site".

DONATIONS RECEIVED BY VVAA VIC

VVAA Victorian State Branch gratefully acknowledges two \$500 donations received from:

The Frankston RSL Ladies Auxiliary.

Victoria Barracks - Corps of Guides.

The donation are very welcome and will assist VVAA in providing key services to veterans - many thanks and gratitude to both organisations.

Honour the Dead but Fight Like Hell for the Living

VIETNAM VETERANS DAY 2008 ~ MELBOURNE

The Vietnam Veterans Day Ceremony 2008 will be conducted at the Melbourne Shrine of Remembrance on Monday 18th August 2008. This year commemorates the 40th anniversary of the Battles for Fire Support/Patrol Bases Coral and Balmoral and will be similar in format to that of 2006 when we commemorated the 40th anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan

This year you will be able to enjoy a hot breakfast before the march form up and meet with mates to re-tell old tales embellished over time.

The format will include the following:

- * Hot breakfast before the March
- * Military equipment appropriate to the occasion on display
- * March up the Shrine Forecourt with Banners
- * Formal ceremony with VIPs and Guest Speaker

As for 2006 we are looking forward to another big roll up of Vietnam Vets, families and friends and urge all VVAA Sub Branches and Members to again give priority to attending Melbourne for what is most likely to be the last of the 40th commemorations that will be conducted by the VVAA Victorian State Office.

For further information contact:

- * VVAA State Office on (03) 9655 5588,
- * email secretary@vvaavic.org.au
- * VV Day Co-ordinator Maurie Benson on 0417 588 886.

EULOGY SERVICE

CARO will provide limited information on the service of an ex-member to enable an appropriate person to deliver a eulogy at a funeral or memorial service. The person requesting this information must satisfy CARO that he, or she, is acting for the family.

A signed request in writing must be received by

CARO before it may release information however, as time is often crucial, a request by telephone can initiate action.

Army, RAN and RAAF now provide a eulogy service to those conducting graveside services. Often time is crucial so contact:

Service	Telephone	Fax
Army Eulogy Service	03 9282 6235 03 9282 4579	03 9282 5434
Navy Eulogy Service	02 6266 5850	02 6626 5851
RAAF Eulogy Service	02 6266 5850	02 6626 5851

40th Anniversary Coral/Balmoral



In May 1968 Australian troops established Fire Support Bases (FSB) Coral and Balmoral across the route used by the Viet Cong to depart, and approach, Saigon and nearby Bien Hoa. The bases provided defended positions for artillery, mortars and armoured vehicles which would, in turn, support infantry patrols of the area at a time when expectations of enemy attacks on Saigon were high.



The 1st and 3rd Battalions Royal Australian Regiment (1RAR and 3RAR), 102 Field Battery, Royal Australian Artillery, and 161 New Zealand Field Battery, deployed into FSB Coral on 12 May 1968.

A North Vietnamese Regiment attacked the base during the early hours of 13 May, penetrated the 1RAR Mortar Platoon and 102 Field Battery positions and briefly forced the defenders to abandon one of their artillery pieces.

Coral came under attack for a second time at 2.15 am on 16 May when an estimated three battalions of North Vietnamese infantry assaulted the base which was, along with infantry, now also defended by armoured personnel carriers of A Squadron, 3rd Cavalry Regiment. Fighting lasted several hours before the attackers were forced to withdraw.

Further mortar and rocket attacks on Coral followed on 22 May, and again on 26 and 28 May, but the base was not seriously threatened again. Having had the opportunity to establish a strong defensive perimeter, the Australians were able launch their own attacks against the North Vietnamese. On 26 May, in a major contact, infantry and tanks destroyed part of a North Vietnamese bunker system that had been discovered in the vicinity. The Australians continued to launch aggressive patrols from Coral, engaging in combat against North Vietnamese forces and experiencing some fierce actions through until the end of May.



By this time the North Vietnamese had turned their attention to FSB Balmoral which had been established by 3RAR some 4.5 kilometres north of Coral on 24-25 May. Tanks from Nui Dat helped Australian infantry defeat a two battalion-strong North Vietnamese attack just hours after their arrival at the base on 25 May. A second attack followed on 28 May, but a combination of infantry, armour, aircraft, artillery and mortars repelled the North Vietnamese assault. North Vietnamese activity in the area subsided and operations at Coral and Balmoral were suspended on 6 June 1968.

Twenty five Australians were killed during the fighting at Coral/Balmoral. Estimates suggest that more than 300 North Vietnamese were killed in these actions, but exact figures cannot be obtained.

Units involved at Coral/Balmoral

- * HQ 1 Australian Task Force
- * A Sqn 3 Cav Regt
- * HQ 12 Fd Regt (including elements of HQ Battery and Artillery Tactical HQ) with 102 Field Battery and elements of 131 Divisional Locating Battery, Royal Australian Artillery; 161 Field Battery, Royal New Zealand Artillery; and A battery 2/35 Artillery (US)
- * C Squadron 1 Armoured Regiment, including forward repair teams and stores section
- * 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (1 RAR)
- * 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (3 RAR)
- * 1 Field Squadron, Royal Australian Engineers
- * Elements of 5/2 AA Artillery (US)
- * 161 (Independent) Reconnaissance Flight
- * Elements of 104 Signals Squadron, Royal Australian Signals Corps, Logistics Corps and elements of Detachment 1 Ordnance Field Park.
- * Elements of 2 Transport Platoon 5 Company
- * Elements of the Australian Forces Provost
- * Elements of the 9 SQN RAAF

M113A UPGRADE

The M113 Upgrade – now known as M113AS4 - will extensively upgrade 350 M113 armoured vehicles that provide transport and fire support for the Army's mechanised forces.



The upgrade will increase the protection level; firepower; mobility; habitability and logistic supportability. The upgrade includes appliqué armour; a new armoured turret and machine gun; a new engine; drive train and suspension; and the stretching of the Armoured Personnel Carriers and other variants. The fleet will comprise seven vehicle variants: personnel carriers; fitters; recovery; mortar; command; ambulance and logistic vehicles.

Production has commenced to deliver the initial capability into service. The target date of November 2007 for introduction of vehicles for the initial capability may slip to the second half of 2008.

Crew and maintainer training have commenced and procurement of initial spares, special tools and test equipment to support the initial introduction of vehicles has commenced and will continue in parallel with vehicle production.

MEDICARE LEVY

An important notice for those in receipt of DFRDB Payments

The Medicare Levy is automatically deducted from DFRDB.

Individuals who are TPI or have a gold card are exempt from the levy and if they are getting the DFRDB payment as well, they can check with DFRDB to have the levy payments stopped.

At the end of every taxation year, DVA sends a Medicare exemption certificate that you send off with your taxation return.

If you are a DFRDB recipient and have a gold card, you may like to contact DFRDB to see if they are paying the levy from your DFRDB payments - 1300 001 677

Veterans Psychiatric Unit

The much anticipated new VPU at the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital is moving steadily closer to reality with the final scoping and design planning almost complete, the site for the unit established and the potential shortfall of funds for the project being addressed. It is anticipated that construction will start later in the year with completion in late 2009.

Health Study

Go to www.dva.gov.au/health/research/fsp/vv and check out the details of the study.

Study contacts:

Health Study Line 1800 502 302

Postal address:	Email:
DVA	healthstudy@dva.gov.au
PO Box 21	
Woden ACT 2606	

New Indexed DVA Pension Rates

Following on from the Rudd Government's promise to index pension payments, the following Pension Rates apply effective from 20 March, and will be first paid on 27 March 2008..

<u>Service pension</u>	<u>Old rate</u>	<u>New rate</u>	<u>Increase</u>
Single person	\$537.70	<u>\$546.80</u>	\$9.10
Couples (each)	\$449.10	<u>\$456.80</u>	\$7.70
War widow's pension	<u>\$562.70</u>	<u>\$582.40</u>	<u>\$19.70</u>
Income support supplement	<u>\$160.40</u>	<u>\$163.20</u>	<u>\$2.80</u>
Disability pensions	-	-	-
TPI	\$938.00	<u>\$970.50</u>	\$32.50
Intermediate	\$631.20	<u>\$658.50</u>	\$27.30
EDA	\$495.40	<u>\$535.60</u>	\$40.20
100 per cent	\$322.80	<u>\$344.80</u>	\$22.00
10 per cent	\$32.28	<u>\$34.48</u>	\$2.20
MRCA pensions	-	<u>New rate</u>	<u>Increase</u>
Wholly dependent partners death benefit (weekly)	\$281.35	<u>\$291.20</u>	\$9.85
Special Rate Disability Pension (weekly)	\$469.00	<u>\$485.25</u>	\$16.25

be

INCOME SUPPORT INCREASED

Minister for Veterans' Affairs Thursday 14 February 2008

The Rudd Government has introduced legislation to boost allowances paid to veterans on low incomes, the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin, said today.

- * increase the utilities allowance and the seniors concession allowance to \$500 a year
- * increase the telephone allowance from \$88 to \$132 a year for those with a home internet connection.

Subject to passage of the legislation, increases will be made on pension pay day 27 March 2008 and would be paid quarterly rather than the current twice-yearly payments

Utilities allowance is paid to eligible DVA income support recipients to assist with the pay-

ment of energy, rates, water and sewerage expenses will increase from \$107.20 per year to \$500 per year for eligible single pensioners. For each member of a pensioner couple, it will increase from \$53.60 per year to \$250 per year.

Seniors concession allowance is paid to eligible Commonwealth Seniors Health Card holders and eligible Gold Card holders who are over veteran pension age and not eligible for utilities allowance.

All income support pensioners will be eligible for utilities allowance regardless of age and the rates of utilities allowance and seniors concession allowance will be reviewed twice yearly and may be adjusted in March and September each year in line with movements in the cost of living.

Myki SmartCard System not so smart

Press Release on 4 Feb 2008 by Victorian Public Transport Minister Lynne Kosky advised that Victoria's new smartcard ticketing system for public transport, **Myki, has been delayed and will not be in full operation until possibly early next year, making it almost two years late**, Metlink Central Pass Office has confirmed that **Metlink Travel Cards held by Veterans and due to expire in June 2008 will remain valid until such time as the new card is introduced – whenever that may be.** For anyone wanting further information you can call the Metlink Pass Office on (03) 9619 1159 or (03) 9619 1650. Alternatively, you can visit the Central Pass Office located at the north end (at the bus terminal end) of Southern Cross (Spencer Street) Station.

War veteran eligibility criteria

The Travel Concession Card is available to war veterans residing in Victoria who have undertaken war/peacekeeping/peacemaking

service overseas and are in possession of a Department of Veterans Affairs (**DVA Gold or White Card**). The applicant must supply documentary evidence of overseas service from one of the following theatres of war:

- * *World War 2 (3/09/1939 – 28/04/1952)*
- * *Korea (27/06/1950 – 19/04/1956)*
- * *Malaya (29/06/1950 – 30/09/1967)*
- * *Vietnam (31/07/1962 – 29/04/1975)*

or

ADF / Peacekeepers: Association Papers as documentary evidence of related conflicts (but are not limited to) the following:

- * *Afghanistan (War on Terror and UNMCTT)*
- * *Africa (Sierre Leone, Namibia, Somalia, Rwanda, etc)*
- * *Cambodia*
- * *East Timor*
- * *Gulf War 1 and 2*

War widow(er) eligibility criteria

This concession card is available to War widows/ers residing in Victoria in possession of a **DVA Gold or White Card**. A photocopy of the DVA Gold or White Card should be attached to the application.

SENIORS SUNDAY PASS

If you're 60 or more and hold a Victorian Seniors Card you are eligible for a Seniors Sunday Pass that entitles Victorian Seniors Card holders to free travel on metropolitan trains, trams and buses within Zones 1 and 2 on Sundays, [two off-peak travel vouchers](#) per year and [V/Line concession fares](#) at all times.

Seniors Sunday Pass

Free travel within Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong and Warrnambool within the area covered by the Transit system.

Free travel within Mildura, Moe, Morwell and Traralgon within the 'Town Bus' areas.

Where can I have my Seniors Sunday Pass issued on the spot?

At the MetShop between 9.00am – 5.30pm Monday to Friday or 9.00am-1.00pm Saturdays

At all Premium Train Stations between 9.30am and 3.00pm Monday to Friday

At all Staffed V/Line Stations between 9.30am and 3.00pm Monday to Friday.

Have your Victorian Seniors Card with you when you apply.

Off-peak travel vouchers

If you are a Victorian Seniors card holder, you will also receive in the mail two off-peak travel vouchers for use anywhere in Victoria. These vouchers can be exchanged for V/Line tickets before travelling.

Vouchers are valid for [V/Line services](#) anytime on Saturdays and Sundays and at certain times on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Mondays and Fridays are peak days on V/Line and to avoid congestion, free travel is not available to Victorian Seniors on these days.

Vouchers cannot be used on weekday services arriving in Melbourne before 9.30am and departing Melbourne between 4.00pm and 6.00pm.

Alternatively, vouchers can be exchanged at [Premium Train Stations](#) for a [Seniors Daily Metcard](#).

V/Line concessions for Victorian seniors

Victorian Seniors Card holders can travel at concession fares on V/Line train and coach services at all times. This means peak hour fares for seniors are generally halved on weekdays and significantly reduces fares on weekends.

For further information call **131 638**.

VIETNAM VETERANS FAMILY STUDY

The Partners of Veterans Association of Australia Inc.
ABN 95 105 524 972

Patron: Mrs. Lynne Cosgrove

**Register Now for the Upcoming
Greetings to all PVA members.**



Intergenerational Health Study!

Here we are in June already. The year is flying by!!

I hope you are all aware that you and your husbands and sons and daughters can register with the Department of Veterans Affairs (D.V.A.) for the upcoming Intergenerational Health Study.

The D.V.A. needs Vietnam veteran's family members to participate in the Vietnam Veterans' Family Study. It is important to get as many veterans and their families participating in the study as possible. This will give Researchers a realistic picture of the issues affecting Vietnam veterans and their families.

For comparison, the study will also need service personnel of the Vietnam War era who did not go to Vietnam.

The Minister for Veteran's Affairs, Mr. Alan Griffin, is very keen to get as wide an involvement from the veteran community as possible. He is determined that this health study be done with vigor!

The Partners of Veterans Association of Australia need you, our members to "show the way" with this health study. If you have yet to register please do so now and talk to all members of the Vietnam veteran community you know and encourage them also to register.

NOW is the HOUR. We have been fighting for this long enough. The ball is now in our court.

I have often been asked; "[What if not enough sons and daughters register?](#)" "[What if not enough veterans register?](#)" My answer is always the same....we tried our best. If the community we have been fighting for are complacent and don't wholly support this health study, at least I can sleep at night knowing we did our best.

I think we, as a community, should stop "looking for holes and problems" to detract from the study and offer Minister Griffin our full support!

Please remember: "The support of veterans and their families for this study will pave the way for future research to benefit the families of younger veterans from more recent deployments, such as East Timor."

You can register by email, post or phone, so please no excuses!

To contact the Family Study Program:

Email: healthstudy@dva.gov.au
 Web: Vietnam Veteran's Family Study - www.dva.gov.au/health/research/fsp/vv/index.htm
 Phone: 1800 502 302
 Mail: Family Study Program
 Department of Veterans' Affairs
 PO Box 21
 WODEN ACT 2606

Cheers,
 Sue Parker
 Children's Health Spokesperson
 The Partners of Veterans Association of Aust Inc.

TASSIE BUSH RETREAT

The VVAA National Congress 2008 was hosted in May by Tasmania who Block Booked the ***Vietnam Veterans Memorial Bush Retreat at Lake Sorell.***

Anyone wanting to use the Retreat whilst they are touring Tassie can do so by contacting VVAA Tasmania:

John Wright,
VVAA Tas Pres.

Email: vvtaspres@bigpond.com
Phone: (03) 6398 6211
Mob: 0413 291 119

As reported by VAA Tas President, John Wright - "This is an ideal opportunity to enjoy a very pleasant part of our Beautiful State and enjoy what we have to offer."

This Retreat was built in 1989-90 by Vietnam Veterans of Tasmania for the relaxation of all Vietnam Veterans and their families. Mainland Veterans welcome. Situated in the Central Highlands, the Retreat offers peace and quiet all year round. Fishing is at your door step in Lake Sorell or just a few kilometers away at either the Great Lake or Arthur's Lake. Retreats are a great healing therapy, and still are, for those who take the time to use this facility and just relax.

The ***Vietnam Veteran Memorial Bush Retreat*** on the shores of Lake Sorell between Bothwell and Oatlands

in Tasmania a very good wet weather road, you do not need a four wheel drive. The hut consists of kitchen, lounge, 5 bedrooms, bathroom, laundry, car port and BBQ area. All that is needed are doonas etc, food and refreshments (it has three (3) large fridges). Electricity and wood supplied.

Kitchen - refrigerators, electric oven, hot water, cutlery, crockery, pots and pans and large dining setting.

Lounge Room - with wood heater, comfy lounge, television, radio and stereo.

Bed Rooms - 5 bedrooms with bunk beds (all you need to bring is your own linen and pillows).

Bathroom/Laundry - Wheel chair access to shower and toilet. Washing machine.

Access to the Hut is by steps at the front or ramp at the car port end of the building

PLEASE NOTE if staying at the Retreat in the WINTER you may get lots of snow, so be prepared. Don't forget your fishing gear as the lake is open all year round.

MEMORIAL FOR AUSTRALIAN ARMY BAND CORPS

The Australian Army Band Corps (AABC) Association is presently in the process of erecting a memorial at the School of Music at Watsonia to fallen Army Musician/Stretcher Bearers.

This project recognises 6 KIA in Vietnam and acknowledges the contribution of Band/Stretcher Bearer members to the Services.

The concept has been approved within the AABC Assoc. and construction assistance is available from 22 Construction Sqn.

AABC is in the process of applying for funding from Vet Affairs, AABC Asscn Membership, the local RSL, the Australian War Memorial and hopefully VVAA.

Finalisation of the Memorial Project is expected by the end of this year.

Any donations available from VVAA Vic Sub Branches and Members would be gratefully received by the AABC and can be forwarded through VVAA State Office.



Veteran Community Story Writing & Art Competition (SWAC) 2008

Patron: Maj Gen David J. McLachlan AO

Opening Date: 1 April 2008

Closing Date: 25 July 2008

The Story Writing & Art Competition (SWAC) is a popular annual event run specifically for members of Victoria's ex-service community. The competition began in 1962 at the Repatriation General Hospital as therapy for returned soldiers and has grown in popularity ever since. It now attracts hundreds of entries each year in the categories of painting, craft, photography, story writing and poetry.

Participating in SWAC plays an important part in enhancing the health and well being of members of the ex-service community. The competition provides the opportunity to develop new skills and interests and through sharing experiences with others, helps veterans to live challenging and fulfilling lives.

The Competition also provides entrants with an opportunity to have their works publicly acknowledged and where appropriate, recorded for posterity. Stories submitted under the "True War Story" category are retained in the private records collection of the Australian War Memorial.

Entries are now invited for the 2008 Victorian Veteran Community Story Writing & Art Competition.

This competition is open to eligible members of the **ex-service community**, including veterans, widows and children of the above aged 18 years and over who reside in Victoria.

Entries may be:

- * Story Writing & Poetry
- * Art
- * Craft
- * Photography

Novice through to experienced levels welcome.

Special 2008 Writing category on 90th Anniversary of the end of World War 1, which is entitled:

"The War to end all Wars".

Maximum 1,500 words.

For entry forms call the SWAC Co-ordinator on 1300 132 515
or Country Residents 1800 555 254

or e-mail; Swac@dva.gov.au

or write to; GPO Box 87A Melbourne VIC 3001

or download from DVA internet;
[www.dva.gov.au/vic/services/swac/
form.htm](http://www.dva.gov.au/vic/services/swac/form.htm)



Honour the Dead but Fight Like Hell for the Living

Notice Board

The Notice Board is intended to be similar to those you see in other Veteran publications and can include personal notices such as *Wanted to find, Reunions, get togethers, hobby related matters etc.*

The VVAA Victoria Branch President retains the right to refuse acceptance of any notice that does not accord with the aims and objectives of the VVAA.

Please forward your notices to the State Office or Email to 'Editor VVAAVIC@vvaavic.org.au'.

Vale: 36498 Richard (Dick) Stanley CULLIFORD 709 Sig Tp SVN 65/66 passed away 12th Feb 2008. A former National & State VVAA President, Dick was a stalwart member of the VVAA and a great advocate of veteran support. He will be sadly missed by his veteran mates.

2 FIELD AMBULANCE
Vietnam 1966/67
42nd REUNION

17 – 19 OCTOBER, 2008

Ex members of 2 Field Ambulance are invited to attend the 42nd Reunion in Adelaide.

Information about the itinerary and costs etc can be obtained by contacting either:

Rodger Eyles, Honorary Treasurer – 02 66536927 – vampire66@internode.on.net

Phil Hay, Honorary Secretary – 07 38690250 - dha09232@bigpond.net.au

Looking for **Peter BROWN RAAF A315185** who served with No. 2 Sqn SVN May 1967-Dec 1967. Any-one with information should contact:
Ms Anna Wise (Secretary Benalla RSL)
Mail: PO Box 272 Benalla Vic 3671
Phone: (03)5762 1206
Mob: 0408 316 603
Email: ajcwise@aapt.net.au

Editorial Erratum

In the Summer 2007 Newsletter we published a "vale" for Rudy Brown stating that he was a member of the Melbourne West Sub-Branch.

While Rudy Brown was a foundation member and past President of the Melbourne West Sub-Branch, at the time of his passing Rudy was not a member of the Melbourne West Sub-Branch - he was an active member of the Noble Park Sub-Branch and RSL.

VVAA NATIONAL CONSTITUTION

The review and rewrite of the National Constitution has taken longer than the gestation of an elephant, but at last it looks like we will get a version that we can sign up to and be confident about. There may be some further discussion on the final form of the constitution as in terms of whether it is produced in "plain English" or in the form we have become

familiar with. Despite this, the constitution will have addressed and remedied a number of anomalies that had been present in past versions of the constitution. Once the dust has settled, the State constitution will need to be reviewed and amended to bring it into line with the National Constitution.

More to follow.

VVCS GROUP PROGRAMS - 2008

What is VVCS?

VVCS is a specialised, confidential service that provides nation-wide counselling and support to Australian veterans, peacekeepers, their families and eligible ADF personnel.

What other services does VVCS provide?

VVCS can provide you with a range of support as well as group programs including individual, couple and family counselling, crisis counselling and Veterans Line, the after hours telephone crisis counselling services. We can also provide you with information, education and referrals to other services.

What are VVCS group programs and who are they for?

VVCS Group programs provide education and information to all Australian veterans, their partners, widows, sons and daughters and eligible ADF personnel. Although some group programs are designed to provide support specific to particular needs or groups e.g. the Sons and Daughters Program

Group Program Eligibility key:

All VVCS group programs are provided at no cost to eligible participants.

V – All Australian veterans who have served in any conflict or peacekeeping operation.

P – Partners, ex-partners < 5 years, war widows of Australian veterans of all conflicts and peacekeeping operations.

S&D – Children of Vietnam Veterans of any age and/or dependent children of other veterans up to the age of 26. A minimum age of 18 is required for all programs.

ADF – Current serving members of the ADF under special referral arrangements.

WCH – DVA white card holders with accepted mental health condition.

**If you have any questions about your eligibility for programs please contact VVCS.*

Early Retirement (Who: V, ADF & WCH)

Introductory 1 day workshop and/or comprehensive program of ten (10) two-hour sessions

This program is available for veterans who have retired or are considering early retirement. It explores attitudes to work and retirement, feelings of stress and loss and teaches skills to help you cope with the transition from the routine and structure of work to retirement.

Dates and locations:

Ballarat workshop	11th October	10am - 1pm
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Doing it Differently: Dealing with Anger and Aggression (Who: V, ADF & WCH)

Twelve (12) two-hour sessions

This program is designed for veterans who experience their anger and/or violent behaviour as a problem. Topics will include triggers to anger and/or violent behaviour and strategies to prevent this behaviour and its consequences.

Dates and locations:

Melbourne Metro	8th July - 23rd September	6pm - 8pm
Bendigo	25th September - 11th December	10am - 12pm

Managing Depression & Overcoming Anxiety (Who: V, ADF & WCH)

Ten (10) two-hour sessions

This program is available for veterans who have been diagnosed with depression and experience some anxiety symptoms. Topics include managing negative thinking, developing self-awareness, lowering physiological arousal and stress, and maintaining motivation.

Dates and locations:

VVCS GROUP PROGRAMS - 2008 ~ cont'd

Sleeping Better (Who: V, ADF & WCH)

3-hour workshop with four follow-up sessions

The objective is to provide participants with an enhanced understanding of their individual sleep patterns, the factors affecting sleep and strategies to facilitate improved sleep patterns.

Dates and locations:

Greensborough	30th July - 27th August	1.30pm - 4.30pm
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Heart Health (Who: V & WCH)

Two (2) one-hour physical activity sessions for 52 weeks.

The Heart Health program is structured and time limited up to 12 months. It aims to help veterans and peace-keepers to increase heart health through regular exercise; establish healthier and sustainable lifestyle improvements; engage in ongoing self-directed heart health activities; and promote social contact. The Heart Health program includes 2 physical activity sessions each week and 15 educational sessions which cover topics such as: diet, stress management, and other important aspects of physical and mental health.

A program can be offered anywhere once a minimum of 15 participants are enrolled.

Residential Lifestyle (Who: V, ADF,WCH & P)

6-day residential

This program is a 6-day residential program designed for veteran couples, however single veterans also report positive benefits and are invited to apply. The program covers strategies to improve your lifestyle and to assist you to manage stress. It will include relaxation and stress management; practical advice on health; strategies to identify and manage anger; problem solving and communication skills.

Dates and locations:

Marysville	24th - 29th August
Marysville	23rd - 28th November

Partners' Self-Care (Who: P)

Introductory 1 day workshop and/or comprehensive program of ten (10) two-hour sessions

This program encourages partners to share experiences and provide mutual support, and assist partners of veterans to consider ways to take care of their own psychological and physical health.

Dates and locations:

Warrnambool workshop	8th September	10am - 1pm
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Sons & Daughters: Life skills (Who: S&D)

3-hour workshops

These information and discussion forums cover topics such as:

- Understanding emotional and mental health impact of war and military training on veterans and their families.
- Building stronger relationships

VVCS GROUP PROGRAMS 2008 ~ cont'd

Anger Management

Dates and locations:

All locations	Contact VVCS for details of next course.
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Sons & Daughters: Discovering Resilience (Who: S&D)

Three (3) four-hour sessions

This program is designed for sons and daughters of veterans who experience significant levels of anxiety or depression. The program is beneficial for participants who often feel overwhelmed by stressful situations and would like to learn how to identify and develop their strengths and resources.

Dates and locations:

Hawthorn	23rd August - 6th September	10.30am - 3pm
Bendigo	8th November - 22nd November	10.30am - 3pm

Sons & Daughters: Anger Management (Who: S&D)

Ten (10) two-hour sessions

This program is designed for sons and daughters of veterans who experience their anger and/or aggressive behaviour as a problem. Topics will include triggers to anger and/or violent behaviour and strategies to prevent this behaviour and its consequences.

Dates and locations:

Melbourne Metro	7th October - 16th December	6pm - 8pm
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Please note, whilst every effort is made to ensure advertised groups are run, they cannot proceed if we do not fill the minimum number of spaces allocated. We encourage you to let other veterans and their families know about these programs

If you are interested in attending a group but are unable to make the date advertised or you need more information, please contact VVCS on 03 8640 8700 or 1800 011 046 or email us at vvcsvic@dva.gov.au

Contact Information: 24 HOURS: 1800 011 046

Email: vvcsvic@dva.gov.au

Website: <http://www.dva.gov.au/health/vvcs/group.htm>

VVCS Melbourne Level 4 / 440 Elizabeth Street MELBOURNE VIC 3000 PHONE: 03 8640 8700 FAX: 03 9663 3683	VVCS Albury/Wodonga 81 Hume Street WODONGA VIC 3690 PHONE: 02 6056 1341 FAX: 02 6056 1236
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VVAA VIC BRANCH INC

BALLARAT

President: Sandy McCANN 5446 7531
 Secretary: Sonya PETROVIC 5331 2563 Mob: 0438 773 042
 E-MAIL: secretary@ballarat.vvaavic.org.au

BENDIGO

President: Max GODWIN 5442 5940
 Secretary: Sue ARTHUR 5446 9033
 E-MAIL: secretary@bendigo.vvaavic.org.au

BOX HILL

President: John HAWARD 9803 3301
 Secretary: Charles KOOK 9872 3325
 E-MAIL: secretary@boxhill.vvaavic.org.au

CASTLEMAINE

President: Alan LANE 5472 3115
 Secretary: Bob MILLER 5472 4146
 E-MAIL: secretary@castlemaine.vvaavic.org.au

CENTRAL HIGHLANDS

President: Dave PARROT JP 5420 7723 Mob: 0419 590 088
 Secretary: Rob HILLIER 5423 2308 Mob: 0438 113 987
 E-MAIL: secretary@centralhighlands.vvaavic.org.au

DIAMOND VALLEY

President: John BONIFACE 9434 6035 Mob: 0416 127 421
 Secretary: David FRY 9459 0294 Mob: 0400 008 509
 E-MAIL: secretary@diamondvalleyanddistrict.vvaavic.org.au

ECHUCA

President: Norm PEACOCK 5480 7580 Mob: 0419 322 569
 Secretary: Gordon JASCH 5482 4962 Mob: 0400 660 585
 E-MAIL: secretary@echuca.vvaavic.org.au

FRANKSTON

President: Martin RUDELBACH 9551 1353
 Secretary: Cheryl MYERS 9776 6600
 E-MAIL: secretary@frankston.vvaavic.org.au

GEELONG & DISTRICTS

President: Mick MUTTON 5244 0580 Mob: 0412 709 223
 Secretary: Bruce ELLIS 5278 5500
 E-MAIL: secretary@geelong.vvaavic.org.au

GIPPSLAND/LATROBE VALLEY

President: Ed JONES 5149 7479
 Secretary: Mick HAWRYLUK 5144 3542
 E-MAIL: secretary@gippslandlatrobevalley.vvaavic.org.au

GOULBURN VALLEY

President: Bill LEE 5873 5391
 Secretary: Kevin HEENAN 5829 2258 Mob: 0418 507 396
 E-MAIL: secretary@goulburnvalley.vvaavic.org.au

INTERNATIONAL/HEADQUARTERS

Administrator: State Office 9655 5588
 E-MAIL: secretary@vvaavic.org.au

MARYBOROUGH

President: Lee TURTON
 Secretary: Bob FLORANCE Ph/Fax 5460 5407
 E-MAIL: secretary@maryborough.vvaavic.org.au

MELBOURNE WEST

President: Vic PILCH 9749 5281 Mob: 0410 350 889
 Secretary: Tony HIND 9748 8101 Mob: 0419 348 558
 E-MAIL: secretary@melbournewest.vvaavic.org.au

MELTON & DISTRICT

President: Kevin KNEEBONE 9746 6672 Mob: 0406 097 430
 Secretary: Linden WEBB JP 9743 2044 Mob: 0407 503 393
 E-MAIL: secretary@meltonanddistrict.vvaavic.org.au

MITCHELL

President: Ross STEWART 5796 2666 Mob: 0407 646 988
 Secretary: Ross GREGSON 5792 3227 Mob: 0417 973 573
 E-MAIL: secretary@mitchell.vvaavic.org.au

MORNINGTON PENINSULA

President: Bob SUTTON 9775 4118 Mob: 0400 825 386
 Secretary: Bob FRANCIS 5981 1285 Mob: 0408 808 041
 E-MAIL: secretary@morningtonpeninsula.vvaavic.org.au

MURRAY BORDER ASSOCIATION

President: Garry TREEVE 02 6059 2765 Mob: 0407 480 201
 Secretary: Neville WIGGINS 02 6032 7725 Mob: 0418 018 427
 E-MAIL: secretary@murrayborder.vvaavic.org.au

MUSEUM

President: Gary PARKER 5956 6400 Mob: 0429 105 330
 Secretary: Bill NOBLE 5956 6400
 E-MAIL: secretary@museum.vvaavic.org.au

NOBLE PARK

President: Ray McCARTHY 9798 5379 Mob: 0418 552 804
 Secretary: John PILKINGTON 9737 9393 Mob: 0413 163 749
 E-MAIL: secretary@noblepark.vvaavic.org.au

NORTH-WEST

President: Tom CLAYTON 9306 7474 Mob: 0438 306 709
 Secretary: Basil TILIGADIS 9354 5299 Mob: 0419 890 340
 E-MAIL: secretary@northwest.vvaavic.org.au

OUTER EASTERN

President: John OCKWELL 5964 3746 Mob: 0409 520 974
 Secretary: Judy HEATH 9799 7739 Mob: 0400 822 644
 E-MAIL: secretary@outereasternmelbourne.vvaavic.org.au

RAAFV

President: Nick LERAY- MEYER AM 9386 6961
 Secretary: Rick HOLMES 9317 7304
 E-MAIL: secretary@raaf.vvaavic.org.au

SWAN HILL

President: Harold HESLOP JP 5033 1896 Mob: 0448 778 010
 Secretary: Ken BALL 5030 2265 Mob: 0438 079 494
 E-MAIL: secretary@swanhill.vvaavic.org.au

WARRNAMBOOL

President: Mick CAIN 5568 4272
 Secretary: Terry McINERNEY 5561 2566
 E-MAIL: secretary@warrnambool.vvaavic.org.au

WEST GIPPSLAND

President: Gary ELLIOTT 5941 1436 Mob: 0409 594 114
 Secretary: John GRACE 5627 6349 Mob: 0431 063 962
 E-MAIL: secretary@westgippsland.vvaavic.org.au

WIMMERA

President: Russ MITTEN 5382 1491 Mob: 0419 539 169
 Secretary: Jim SONEGO 5381 0092
 E-MAIL: secretary@wimmera.vvaavic.org.au

Details also on State Website

www.vvaavic.org.au

Honour the Dead but Fight Like Hell for the Living

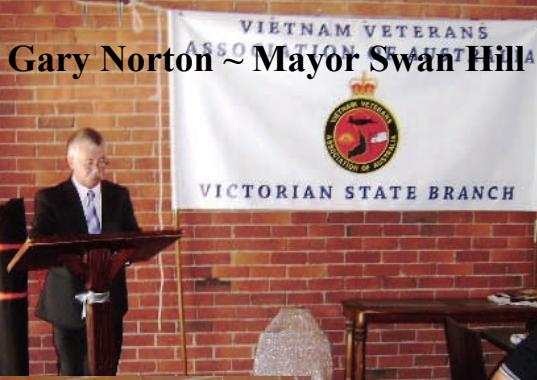
STATE CONFERENCE/AGM ~ SWAN HILL



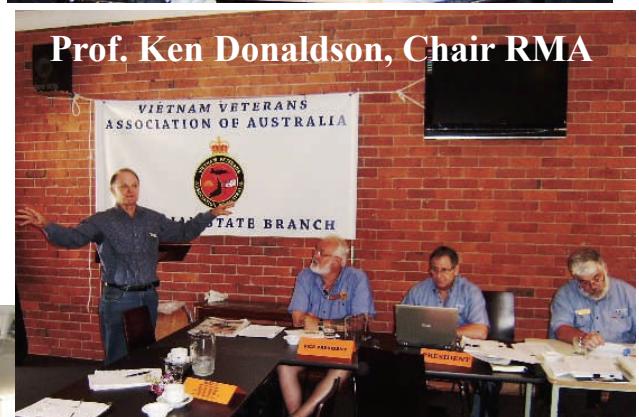
State Team 2008



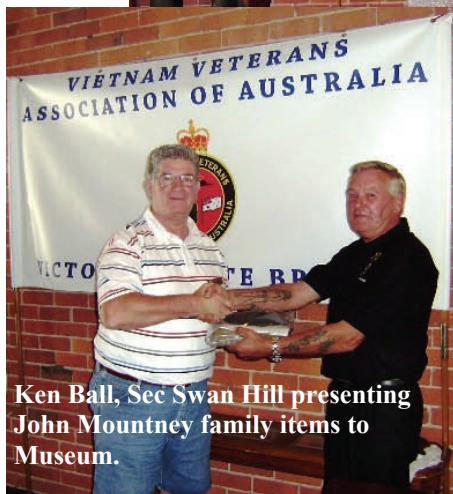
The Girls



Gary Norton ~ Mayor Swan Hill



Prof. Ken Donaldson, Chair RMA



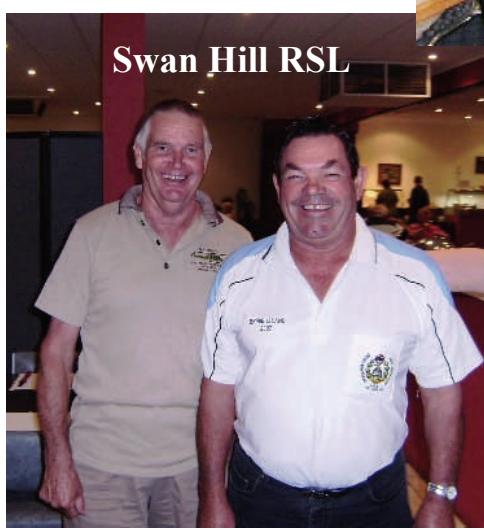
Ken Ball, Sec Swan Hill presenting John Mountney family items to Museum.



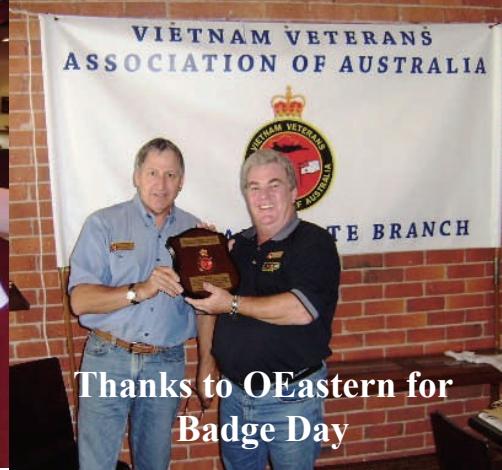
He Da Boss



Presentation from SA to Museum



Swan Hill RSL



Thanks to OEastern for Badge Day



Swan Hill RSL

Honour the Dead but Fight Like Hell for the Living