



FSB-VIC



Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia Victorian Branch Inc.



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MERRY
Christmas



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Honour the dead but fight like hell for the living



So here we are at the end of 2022! What a delight it was to be able to get together at council meetings on a regular basis. On the matter of council meetings, your executive proposes that we hold all future meetings in a central location to take into account more equal travel times for all given the difficulties

some of us have travelling across the state for meetings. I have written to Bendigo Sub Branch requesting that they consider hosting all future council meetings and we will support them in doing so, subject to council approval. Further, reducing the number of meetings will also be put to the council during 2023.

VV Day 2022 went off with a bang with a fitting tribute to our 10-year involvement in the Vietnam War, a tribute to the ANZAC war dead, and recognition of allied nation efforts. With the Governor and Premier in attendance, Vietnam War-era performers, and a good turnout of veterans and family it was the perfect way to bring our large-scale Shrine commemorations to a close. Discussion with council will inform the way ahead for future VV Days with the emphasis likely to be on local activities.

As a follow up to VV Day, each of the consulates was presented with its national flag which was paraded on VV Day. A very emotional letter of thanks was received from the Royal Thai Embassy which has been circulated.

The garden refurbishment project at the Coral/Balmoral facility is complete, and the "Furphy Garden" will be available for all who attend the PTRS service; a nice legacy from us. Other projects remain open, including the member Welfare Package which it is hoped to have complete early in 2023.

Just prior to the State Election, the state government announced a commitment of \$10M to the new National Vietnam Veterans Museum building project; a wonderful start to the wider fund-raising program. The national VVAA body donated funds for a new roller door to be installed at the rear of the existing museum building which will assist with the movement of larger displays and the workings of the refurbishment area. The Bass Shire Council approved the new building permit-a process which took over 18 months to complete at a cost in excess of \$1M-however a number of objections from the community have been lodged with VCAT, which will be heard Early in 2023, at a further cost of over \$100K.

I have written on behalf of the branch to the Premier of Victoria to congratulate him on the result of the state

election, to thank the Governor for her attendance at VV Day commemorations, the new state minister for veterans, Natalie Suleyman, out-going minister Shaun Leane.

It is with sadness that I note the passing of Heather Evans, the National President of the Partners of Veterans Association. Heather was a great worker for her Association and a good friend of the VVAA, sorely missed. I also acknowledge with sadness that we have lost a lot of great mates and members this year, so this has been a sad time for many of us. It is a reminder to us all that although Christmas can be a joyful time for family and friends, it may also be a sad and lonely time for members of our veteran family who have lost a loved one or who find themselves alone at this time of the year. I encourage all Sub-Branches to be aware of member well-being during this time, and I encourage all of us to pick up the phone or drop by for a chat with mates; such a simple gesture can be very powerful.

After negotiations, a plaque to acknowledge the branch's support for bushfire relief will be placed in an appropriate location at Buchan. Members will recall that we donated funds raised to the Buchan community which was used to re vegetate burnt areas and provide drought-tolerant plants to households affected by the fires. Another legacy!

I represented the branch and placed a wreath at a Shrine service in November to mark the 50th anniversary of the cessation of National Service, which was ceased in 1972 by the Whitlam Government: over 200 National Servicemen died in Vietnam and 1200 were wounded. Many more died in service in Australia.

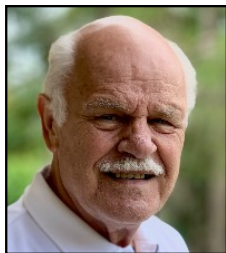
We have maintained a strong voice at the National level and continue to push for a revision of Open Arms services in response to the increase in client numbers brought about by the introduction of the term "Veteran" applying to all service personnel. In that regard, the state council passed a number of motions from Central Highlands that have been elevated to the national level. The Constitution and Closure Plan have been amended and will be issued in the new year.

As the year draws to a close, I thank each and every member for their service to the nation and their support of the branch. I particularly thank your hard-working executive; much of what they do goes unnoticed and is often taken for granted.

From my wife Lyn and I, best wishes to you all over the festive and holiday season. We look forward to renewing our friendships with you in 2023.

Bob E

A WORD FROM YOUR SECRETARY



2022 has started to show signs things may be slowing down. Although our membership remains at a reasonably consistent level compared with previous years members are passing away at a faster rate. Meetings are getting harder to plan for, with many executive

members succumbing to illness and in many cases so are their spouses.

Mixed meetings of some face to face and some via ZOOM are becoming more common. For the State Executive it has been some time since our Assistant Secretary and Membership manage has been to a face-to-face meeting so the ZOOM alternative has been adopted to allow them to participate.

Our Assistant Treasurer Peter Bright has resigned so he can focus on family and their ill health. We thank Peter for his massive contribution to VVAA Victorian Branch over many years and wish him well. This has left us to consider certain options in organizing, in particular, State Council meetings. We are spread widely across the state so in view of this the Executive is considering adopting a more central area at which to meet for our AGM/Congress and Council meetings. At this stage it look as though Bendigo will be the more suitable area. State meetings are currently held three (3) times a year. Travel distances and times for some regional Sub-Branchedes will from now start to get more and more cumbersome. As a result consideration is being given

to reducing the frequency of these State Council meetings to two (2) times a year commencing in 2024. 2022 was a great year for VVAA Victorian Branch. Vietnam Veterans Day was well supported by the Sub-Branchedes and marked the last major event to be held by VVAA Victorian Branch at Melbourne's Shrine of Remembrance. All future events will now be held at the Sub-Branch level within their respective communities and on the actual day of August 18.

Natural disasters have continued again this year with major flooding throughout the State disrupting our June State Council meeting, which needed to be cancelled, then leaving only October to finish off the year.

COVID is back once again with many members falling victim to it. Reports of major COVID infections amongst our lot came from mainly the Bendigo Regional Veteran Centre which had need to close several times and Rosebud. (*Mornington Peninsula Sub-Branch*)

The State Executive extends their best wishes and thanks to all Sub-Branch Executive/Committees for their continued hard work and effort in making VVAA Victorian Branch the strong association that it is.

I wish you all a Merry Christmas, stay healthy and safe. Best wishes for the up and coming New Year 2023.

George Skell
State Secretary

ATTENTION 1RAR BATTLE OF CORAL VETERANS

I am keen to contact any 1RAR Battle Group members in Victoria who might be willing to participate in audio/visual recordings of their experiences as part of a project for the **National Vietnam Veterans Museum** recording of Vietnam experiences. Given the age of 1RAR Battle Group folk, there is an element of urgency in this request.

Contact me at sthelena@bigpond.com if interested.

Cheers,

Bob Elworthy AM

VVAA Vic State President



VIETNAM VETERANS DAY 2022

After cancellation of Services for 2020 and 2021 due to COVID restrictions it was a great relief to finally get over the line for what was to be the final full scale Vietnam Veterans Day Service to be conducted at the Melbourne Shrine of Remembrance by VVAA Victorian Branch.. Future years will see less formal gatherings at the Shrine on Vietnam Veterans Day. VVAA Victorian Sub Branches are encouraged to conduct Services in their own local areas.

For the VVAA Victorian Branch the occasion was one of mixed feelings as the Branch has been Host of Vietnam Veteran Day Services at the Melbourne Shrine since 1990.

This year we commemorated the 60th anniversary of Australia's entry into Vietnam, the 50th anniversary of Australia's withdrawal of combat forces from Vietnam and the 56th anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan. It was fitting also to have Long Tan Platoon commander Dave Sabben MG present and to lay a wreath for the fallen of Long Tan.

Included in this year's Service were Vietnam era entertainers Normie Rowe AM, Denise Drysdale, Marcie Jones, John Schumann AM and Mike Brady AM. All attending the Service were presented with a number of Vietnam era songs appropriate to the occasion.



VIETNAM VETERANS DAY 2022



ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, MELBOURNE

A Service in Memory of Australian Defence Force Members Who Served in Vietnam 1962 - 1975.

21 October 2022

The annual Service for Vietnam Veterans Service at St Paul's Cathedral Melbourne was well attended by a sizeable group of Veterans, wives and friends.

The service was once again delivered by The Reverend Canon Robert Vun, Canon Commissioner and Army Reserve Chaplin. The Welcome and Address was presented by VVAA Victorian Branch State President Bob Elworthy AM and the Scripture reading by Paul Vaughan of the Diamond Valley Sub-Branch.



THE ONLY COLOUR THAT MATTERED WAS GREEN

Bob Elworthy AM

Approximately 60,000 Australian men and women were entitled to call themselves Vietnam veterans. Within that number, were over 250 Indigenous Australians and others whose family lineage can be traced back to at least 37 other nations.

In the melting pot of Vietnam, it mattered not from whence they came, the only colour that mattered on the ground was the green of the jungle uniform, not the colour of one's skin or the spelling of one's name. That is not to devalue one's heritage, or those who served on ships, but rather to confirm that on the soil of Vietnam we all were one: one in a common aim, one in reliance on each other, and all one colour.

There are remarkable stories of indigenous brothers, exempt from call up, refused enlistment, who simply went to another recruiting station and joined up. Stories of brothers born in German concentration camps, born in Russia, Poland, Tanganyika, New Guinea, Falkland Islands and other far-flung places, all in green, a band of brothers at the front line.

To this day, 50 years on from the end of the Vietnam conflict, we still greet each other as "brother" or "sister", colour blind still, drawn not by race but by the unbreakable ties that bind Vietnam veterans together, and by the green of our uniforms, the only colour that mattered.

LEST WE FORGET



Rev Canon Robert Vun



Bob Elworthy AM



Paul Vaughan



Attendance

SUB BRANCHES - WHAT'S ON?

DIAMOND VALLEY ~ (DVIETS)

Winter saw some unexpected developments for the DViets at committee level – during the year Terry Barnes resigned from committee due to health reasons and President Bill Little also resigned from committee for personal reasons. Both of the guys made their decisions with reluctance.

VP Duncan Duke assumed the mantle of A/President for the duration of the year.

The sub-branch has continued its frequent outings organised by Margie Van Poeteren and the varied trips have been enjoyed by all participants.

Of special note was a *Christmas In July* trip to Healesville.

Other destinations included the annual trip to Shepparton, for a *Day At The Races* in Kilmore, the *Elvis Exhibition* in Bendigo was a highlight of the year, a trip to Marysville/Healesville and a trip on the Castlemaine-Maldon steam train.

The guys also enjoyed the annual *Whistlestop train* day out to Riddell's Creek – this year over two journeys because of public transport hiccoughs on the first attempt.

In October a hardy group of seven souls travelled to Lakes Entrance for three nights relaxation. It was a great stay at the Lakes Entrance RSL accommodation units. We arrived back to our homes safe and sound after the relaxing but eventful three days...but looking for a repeat in 2023. The hospitality at Lakes Entrance motel was exceptional and made our stay so much more memorable – everyone could give thought to making the same trip.

Our last big event for the year is our Christmas Breakup in December and numbers are looking very strong for this most anticipated day.

All in all, a pretty good year especially taking into account the previous few years burdens.

On a very sad note, the sub-branch lost member Peter Burns in November after several decades of him persevering bravely with poor health.

We wish all of State Office and members through the state (and beyond) a very happy and safe Christmas/New Year.

Duncan Duke
A/President
DViets.



"HOW DO YOU HAVE ROOM FOR THAT CAKE? MY DAD JUST TOLD ME YOU'RE FULL OF BALONEY."



MY WIFE SAYS THAT I NEVER LISTEN TO HER OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT

GEELONG

VIETNAM VETERANS DAY IN GEELONG

The Geelong SB commemorated Vietnam Veterans Day on Sunday 14th August. Among our special guests was the Acting Prime Minister of Australia, the Hon. Richard Marles MP. Richard is the Deputy PM and Minister for Defence.

The turn-out of members and supporters was pleasing given that we have been unable to hold the memorial service for two years. The weather was kind, despite it being August. Vietnam vets gathered and then marched down the Vietnam Veterans Avenue of Honour ending at the Vietnam Memorial Park.

Another feature of the service was the song ‘The Mist of Long Tan’ performed by Vin Healy, a local musician from Geelong. (This song can be found on Youtube)

On completion of the service members were invited to the City of Geelong Bowling Club for lunch. All in all a great for Geelong Vietnam veterans and their families and friends.

On the 18th August a group from Geelong ventured to Melbourne for the major commemoration at the Shrine of Remembrance.



After the official welcome and opening prayers our guest speaker Major Bill Whitehead (Rtd) addressed the gathering.

Bill's speech was forthright and in support of all Vietnam veterans had achieved since the end of the war. It was appropriate that the

Acting PM was with us and got the message. Bill was the author of the RSL's presentation to the Royal Commission into Defence Personnel and Veteran suicide.



Thank you goes to the VVAA Vic Executive for organising another memorable service at the Shrine.

From a life on the sea to the quiet of Ocean Grove



Peter Foote spent 22 years serving his country, including during the Vietnam War. (Ivan Kemp)

Thursday August 18 was Vietnam Veterans' Day. Matt Hewson spoke to Peter Foote about his 20 years in the navy and his role in the war.

For Peter Foote, retired Chief Petty Officer in the Royal Australian Navy (RAN), it wasn't so much that he chose to be a sailor; sailing chose him.

Peter, now 73 and living in Ocean Grove, recalls spending time as a child with his seafaring grandfather in Tasmania.

"My grandfather was connected with the Australian Navy in the first World War, and he'd also been a sailor, merchant mariner, on windjams, including Polly Woodside," he recalls.

"He'd lived his life on the sea, and when we visited him in Tasmania he was always showing us the boats he'd make, knots to tie. He was a good guiding hand.

"And later I went into the naval cadets, or sea cadets as they were called in those days, in Albert Park lake on the TS Melbourne. I had a little sailor's uniform, learned all the steps.

And the next progression from there was to get a position in the Junior Recruit Scheme, which was naval entry for young people from 15-and-a-half to 16-and-a-half."

Just before his 16th birthday in 1965, Peter stepped onto the HMAS Leeuwin in Fremantle to begin his junior training for the RAN, a 12-month intensive course to prepare for his first ship posting.

"It was no rookie school three-month job, it was 12 months of being treated as a full adult," he said.

"We were well-drilled, fit as anyone could be in preparation for our first ship, and mine turned out to be the HMAS Sydney."

First commissioned in 1948, HMAS Sydney was Australia's first aircraft carrier, but by the time Peter joined her in 1966 she had been refitted as a fast troop transport and was already nicknamed the "Vung Tau Ferry".

"I had chosen engineering as the path I wanted to follow, so I was taught the rudimentaries of all the propulsion machinery down in the engine room and boiler rooms of HMAS Sydney," Peter said.

"Our job was to take the Army, all its boys and vehicles and anything else they wanted carried, up to Vietnam from Australia.

"It was just before my 17th birthday when I joined the Sydney along with my colleagues from recruit school in WA. We were the youngest people in Vietnam, I think. We weren't even old enough to vote, but we'd been trained for what we needed to do, and you do it."

Peter remembers well the tension on board as the crew undertook the 24-hour operation to unload the ship.

"Of a nighttime it was darkening ship, it was constantly guarded because we were, of course, something that was of interest to the other side," he said.

"We had our own ship's boats and divers checking the hull, as well as armed sentries posted in all areas while we tried to get the gear off.

"At night those of us youngsters who were up on the sponsons were eyeing the fireworks going off in different directions on the jungle side of the hills, which was interesting."

Over the next two decades Peter served on a number of different ships, including the destroyer escort HMAS Derwent – "she was the greyhound, the guardian, the sheep dog for lovely, juicy targets like the Sydney" – on which he partook in assisting with the Hobart bushfires in

1967 and HMAS Supply, the oil tanker supply vessel for the RAN.

But in between postings Peter continued to study as an engineer, and in 1977 was posted to Williamstown dockyard to become the naval assistant to the general manager's office.

"The general manager at the time was a naval commodore, and he was surrounded by civilians and public servants," Peter said.

"My job was basically making sure that the Australian navy ships that were going in and coming out were looked after.

"We accommodated crews whose ships were getting pulled down and put back together, all the logistics of that, and also represented the dockyard when we had open days and other public events."

As Peter's time of service approached 20 years, he decided to finish out his time in the navy in the recruitment office in Sydney, but found himself called up to travel to Singapore.

"Due to unforeseen circumstances someone was needed in Singapore to work for the RAN Liaison Office as Chief Petty Officer, and because I was out of branch at the time I was available," Peter said.

"I ended up spending a good three-and-a-half years there, from 1983 to '86. My officer in charge was the Defence attache for Singapore. There were only two of us in the office, and it was an extremely busy but enjoyable time."

In 1987 Peter retired from full-time service and joined Skilled Engineering, for which he also worked stints in Singapore and Jakarta, before seeing out his professional career in Melbourne.

Peter said he was glad to have served his country for 20 years, and his time in the navy had delivered on its promise of an interesting and event-filled life, but he had missed out on many parts of family life along the way.

"By the time I finished full-time service I was ready to make my way on the civilian side of things," Peter said.

"I had family, and I'd been away from them more than I should have been. That's just the nature of being in the navy, but you do miss the home life, the family life.

"I continued with reserve time for the navy after I'd left full-time, but I was ready for no more moving, no more suitcases."

Peter and his wife settled in Ocean Grove in 2014, and the couple enjoy being away from the hustle and bustle of the city.

"After Eltham, which had changed from being a village to a suburb, we were looking for somewhere that's a bit quieter, out of the traffic," he said.

"The kids have grown up and left the nest, and when the work's done here in Ocean Grove it's very quiet and enjoyable.

"I still catch up with my old navy chums who are around, I've joined the Ocean Grove RSL, the Naval Association, and changed over to the Geelong Vietnam Veterans.

"When we've got memorials, parades, I try to lend a hand, or sell badges for ANZAC and Remembrance Days."

Courtesy of Geelong Independent

The Laziest Man

The Sergeant was addressing a squad of 25 recruits: "I have a nice easy job for the laziest man here. Which one of you wants it?" 24 men raised their hands. One didn't.

The Sergeant approached him. "Why didn't you raise your hand?"

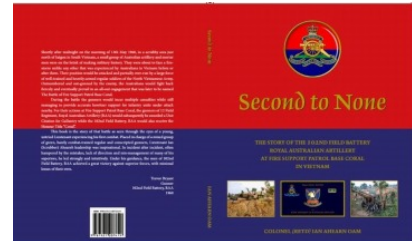
"Too much trouble, Sarge," was the reply.

He got the job.

SECOND TO NONE

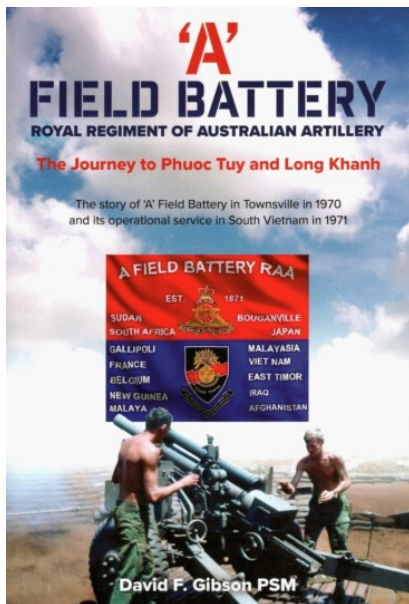
COLONEL (Retd) IAN AHEARN

At a 102 Field Battery Vietnam 1968/69 Group reunion in the Adelaide Hills SA Colonel (Retd) Ian Ahearn OAM launched his new book *SECOND TO NONE*, which is his account of the actions of 102 Field Battery and associated elements of 12 Field Regiment on the nights of 12/13 and 14/15 May 1968 at FSPB Coral. As a young lieutenant, Ian “Scrubber” Ahearn was GPO of 102 Field Battery during its 1968/69 tour. He is therefore ideally situated to tell the whole story of artillery at Coral, warts and all.



For many years there has been a lot of talk about having a book written about artillery at Coral, and authors Mark Jameson and Kit Cullen put many hours of research trying to make it happen. When they advised in 2021 that they were unable to continue the project, Ian Ahearn stepped in and volunteered to complete the task. The result is this well-written and well-researched book which is a great read for anyone, but will be especially relevant for anyone who was actually there.

If you would like a copy of the book, they are available from the author for \$30, which includes postage. Send the money by bank transfer to IF & ER Ahearn, BSB 082-902, A/c No. 516330852. Please put “Book” and your surname in the reference field. Then send an email to Scrubber at ifahearn45@gmail.com and tell him the your mailing address.



In late 1969 the 12th Field Regiment was warned to prepare for active service in South Vietnam in 1971-72. ‘A’ Field Battery replaced 102 Field Battery in the regiment and moved to Townsville in late 1969. For the next twelve months ‘A’ Battery undertook the task of fully manning the battery and training both regular Army and national servicemen in a variety of artillery roles for active service.

David Gibson, a national serviceman, joined the battery in March 1970 and was told very early on that he “was now in ‘A’ Battery, we have to better than the rest.” He tells the story of life in Townsville and of an artillery gun battery working hard on High Range in Townsville.

The battery moved to South Vietnam in February 1971 and was to be the direct fire support battery for 3RAR who were also on their second tour of duty in Vietnam. David gives a very detailed view of how the battery performed in its shortened tour of South Vietnam from official records and from personal anecdotes. Battery members were involved in the Battle of Long Khanh both with the infantry as a forward observer party and on the gun line providing much needed fire support from Fire Support Base Pamela.

This book tells the story of what the battery did in South Vietnam, the highs and lows, and how those times banded a group of men together, men who are still good mates all these years later.

“You are ‘A’ Battery — you have to be the best”.

ORDERS can be placed through Author David Gibson:

Contact: David GIBSON PSM
 Mobile: 0425 753 533
 Email: david.rita1@bigpond.com

Cost : \$39.99
 Normal Mail: \$10.00
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Post: Friends of NVVM Association
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