



Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia Victorian Branch Inc.

NEWS BULLETIN

DECEMBER 2024

THE CONWAY CROSS

7213 Private Harry Conway
21st Battalion AIF



On the 28th April 1918 Pte Harry Conway succumbed to injuries he received while fighting in France—this Cross was placed on his grave.

The Cross was eventually returned to Australia but then “lost”. It was, however, fortuitously discovered beneath a house, and the journey to restoration began.

VVAA Victorian Branch became aware of the existence of the Cross at the Montmorency/Eltham RSL and undertook to have it restored and prepared for viewing.

It now rests at the Montmorency/Eltham RSL as a lasting Memorial to Pte Harry Conway who has now returned home.

Honour the dead but fight like hell for the living

ESB-VIC





VVAA Victorian State Branch—Executive

ABN: 34 750 672 219

State President	Bob ELWORTHY AM	Mob: 0402 106 262
State Vice President	Brendan KINCADE OAM	Mob: 0414 948 305
State Secretary	George SKELL	Mob: 0410 275 651
State Assistant Secretary	Sue McQUEEN	Mob: 0400 821 457
State Treasurer	Maurie BENSON	Mob: 0417 588 886
State Assistant Treasurer	Peter BRIGHT	Mob: 0437 936 391
State Branch Welfare Officer	Michael NORTH	Mob: 0400 661 707
State Branch Executive Member	Lindsay McQUEEN	Mob: 0488 068 880
State Office Manager		
Editor - FSB-Vic	Maurie BENSON	Mob: 0417 588 886
Website		
Education Team	Ray WESTON	Mob: 0447 386 635

VVAA Victorian Branch—State

Address:	VVAA Victorian Branch Anzac House L3/4 Collins St MELBOURNE VIC 3000	MEMBERSHIP MAIL: C/O CVVSC PO BOX 820 BENDIGO VIC 3552
Phone:	(03) 9655 5588	
Fax:	(03) 9655 5582	
Secretary:	secretary@vvaavic.org.au	
Office:	office@vvaavic.org.au	
Newsletter:	editor@vvaavic.org.au	
Web Site:	www.vvaavic.org.au	
Office Hours:	UNMANNED—Refer Secretary.	

DISCLAIMER: The material in 'FSB-VIC' is in the nature of general comment only and neither purports nor is intended to be advice on any particular matter. No person should act on the basis of any matter contained in 'FSB-VIC' without considering and, if necessary, taking appropriate professional advice upon their own particular circumstances. The VVAA, the authors and editors expressly disclaim all and any liability in respect of anything done or omitted to be done by any such person in reliance, whether whole or partial, upon the whole or part of the contents of 'FSB-VIC'.



Much has been achieved in 2024 with the following projects being finalized:

**Coral-Balmoral “Furphy Garden”* refurbishment, providing a safe and useful outdoor breakout location for group sessions as well as a quiet retreat for all staff and clients of the Coral-Balmoral complex.

*Welfare Pack project delivering a package of information to every member of the Branch. The pack contains relevant information about the transition to retirement village/aged care facilities.

*Victorian Vietnam Veterans tree and plaque unveiled in the gardens of the Melbourne Shrine of Remembrance.

*The preservation and display of a WW1 Wooden Cross at the Montmorency-Eltham RSL Sub-Branch.

*Placement of a plaque in the Buchan township acknowledging our contribution to bushfire rehabilitation.

On-going projects include:

*Schools visit program at the National Vietnam Veterans Museum.

*Placing plaques at Sub-Branch locations and other places

of importance to the Vietnam War effort.

*Wills and Power of Attorney cost assistance to members.

In addition:

The Branch provided funds for a Long Tan Bursary awarded to the daughter of a Victorian Vietnam veteran and a grant to another Victorian-based Long Tan Bursary applicant.

Provided funds to the Mitchell Shire Council for urgent maintenance and repairs needed at the *Seymour Vietnam Veterans Commemorative Walk*. The Branch is pursuing external funding opportunities to ensure Memorial upkeep is adequately funded in the future. The Branch is currently considering a Memorandum of Understanding with the Mitchell Shire Council.

The VVAA Victorian Branch Education Team wound up its activities, ending approximately 30 years of school visits, community information sessions, support to VetRide, the NVVM, and the Vietnamese community. The E Team vehicle has been transferred to the NVVM.

At the national level, the Branch continues to contribute approximately 50% of the national VVAA membership, and Branch executive members attend two national-level meetings annually in Canberra.

GOVERNMENT’S RESPONSE TO THE FINAL REPORT OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION INTO DEFENCE AND VETERAN SUICIDE

- ◆ Establish a new statutory entity to oversee enduring and systemic reform. This entity will provide independent oversight and evidence-based advice to improve suicide prevention, and drive better outcomes for serving and ex-serving ADF personnel.
- ◆ An interim head will be appointed as soon as possible to work across government towards the establishment of a legislated oversight body by September 2025.
- ◆ An interim head will be appointed as soon as possible to work across government towards the establishment of a legislated oversight body by September 2025. Establish a Taskforce in the Department of the

Prime Minister and Cabinet which will draw in expertise from across Government as well as external experts to consider matters of detailed implementation.

- ◆ Direct DVA to co-design, with the veteran community, a new agency focused on wellbeing to be established within DVA.
- ◆ Fund DVA to continue consultation on the development of a national ex-service organisation peak body.
- ◆ REFER: <https://www.dva.gov.au/news/latest-stories/government-response-royal-commission-defence-and-veteran-suicides-final-report>

THE CONWAY CROSS

ME
Montmorency Eltham RSL

Scan or follow link for more details and information about Harry Conway, his life and the story of his cross

<https://sites.google.com/view/memsl/memorabilia/the-conway-cross>

The Conway Cross display presented and financially supported by the Victorian Branch of the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia

Harry Conway lived in Christmas Hills, enlisting in the A.I.F. on 6 November 1916. On 11 April 1918 he was shot, sadly succumbing to this on 28 April 1918.

He is buried at St Sever Cemetery central Rouen, France.

His grave was marked by a wooden cross.

The Conway Cross
7213 Private Harry Conway

Honouring his Service and Sacrifice



Cross unveiled by family members.



Metal ID markers on the Conway Cross.

VIETNAM TREE & PLAQUE

VIETNAM VETERANS DAY 2024

MELBOURNE SHRINE OF REMEMBRANCE

Following approaches to the Melbourne Shrine of Remembrance, VVAA Victorian Branch was given approval to have a Tree and Plaque within the Shrine Precinct.

Vietnam Veterans Day 2024 saw the Tree/Plaque unveiled and dedicated by Chaplain Sion Gough Hughes.

Another step for VVAA Victorian Branch and one that sees a point of reference to Vietnam Veteran's contribution to Australia's military history.

The Tree and Plaque is also a place of quiet reflection to remember those lives lost in Australia's times of war and conflict.



LEST WE FORGET



Honour the dead but fight like hell for the living

VETERAN WELFARE PACKS

As a Veteran Welfare Project, VVAA Victoria Branch received a Government Grant to produce and distribute Packages of Veteran Welfare material to all VVAA Victorian Branch members.

What an exercise, especially after an exhausting day where volunteers collated and packaged 1,800 Packs - tired and sore but greatly relieved, the job was complete. Big thanks to our VVAA Diamond Valley Sub Branch volunteers without whose assistance our State

Executive Team would have struggled on the day.

Distribution to Sub Branches was completed at the October 2024 State Council Meeting in Bendigo where Sub Branch Delegates were handed Packs for each of their Sub Branch members.

WELFARE AT WORK



NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

History of *FSB-Vic*.

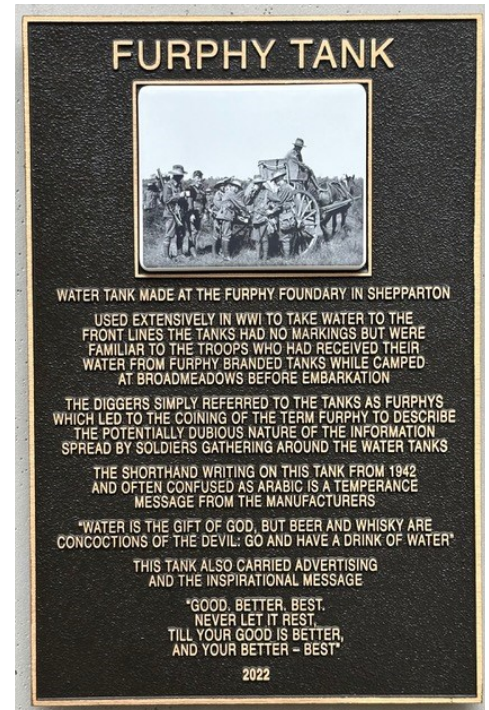
The VVAA Vic Branch Newsletter was originally circulated as *TAOR* back in the days when the State Office operated out of the Kew RSL. In 2000 we moved the State Office to RSL ANZAC House when the issues of *TAOR* lapsed/ceased.

In 2005 *FSB-Vic* commenced and continued until 2022 when it ceased. Throughout that time it circulated as a hard copy Newsletter mailed to all members. Cost factors saw that process converted to on-line editions produced on the VVAA Vic Branch website. Website updates and review of planning interrupted that process.

FSB-Vic News Bulletin will now again be published on the VVAA Vic Branch website as an online production and be renewed/updated on a regular basis.



FURPHY GARDEN – AUSTIN REPAT



THE FURPHY GARDEN PROJECT

The *Furphy Garden Project* was an initiative undertaken by VVAA Victorian Branch, funded by a Victorian State Government Grant.

The idea came about after seeing that the former Garden/Rest Area could do with some updating to reflect not only the serenity of that area for veterans and families but to also have a Link to military history and the relief brought by the arrival of a Furphy Water Tank to tired and thirsty soldiers.

WELFARE AT WORK

Honour the dead but fight like hell for the living

V V A A V I C B R A N C H — B U C H A N F I R E S

During SUMMER 2019 - 2020 Victoria was ravaged again by bush fires with devastating losses for so many communities.

It was for the East Gippsland area, VVAA Victorian members chipped in with donations of support.

While, against the overwhelming losses in the area, our donation demonstrated that Vietnam Veterans cared about those communities, many of which housed Vietnam Veterans, and were prepared to stand and assist.

Our donation was provided to assist regeneration in the area around Buchan.

The picture opposite is a VVAA Vic Branch Plaque which stands in the Buchan area acknowledging our contribution to bushfire rehabilitation.



L > R: Geoff Hopkins, President VVAA Gippsland Sub Branch, Evelyn Schmidt, Coordinator Buchan Neighbourhood House, Jeff McCole, Vietnam Veteran.

V V A A V I C B R A N C H — E T E A M

VVAA VICTORIAN BRANCH—EDUCATION TEAM (ETEAM)

The ETEAM has been presenting to schools and other interested groups since the mid 1990s and is the driving “tool” the VVAA Vic Branch has in terms of public education on all aspects of the Vietnam War. Thousand of students have attended talks by ETEAM members over the years and learned first hand about the Vietnam War from those who were involved. The ETEAM members work closely with the History Teachers Assoc. and the school curriculums as they related to Australia’s History in the Vietnam War.

As time moves on and age becomes a factor for all of us it is now time to close down ETEAM operations and say farewell to the much loved ETEAM Van - it now has a new home at the Vietnam Veterans Museum on Philip Island.



VVAA Victoria Branch – Meeting Calendar 2025

5 February	State Executive meeting (10.00am Anzac House)
12 March	State Executive meeting (10.00am Anzac House)
23 April	State Executive meeting (10.00am Anzac House)
4 June	State Executive meeting (10.00am Anzac House)
2 July	State Executive meeting (10.00am Anzac House)
6 August	State Executive meeting (10.00am Anzac House)
3 September	State Executive meeting (10.00am Anzac House)
8 October	State Executive meeting (10.00am Anzac House)
12 November	State Executive meeting (10.00am Anzac House)
17 December	State Executive meeting (10.00am Anzac House)

21 - 22 February	State Council Meeting—Bendigo
20 -21 June	State Congress (AGM) & Council Meeting—Bendigo
24 - 25 October	State Council Meeting—Bendigo

7 - 8 May	National Congress/Council Meeting
16 - 17 October	National Council Meeting



*Merry Christmas and a Happy
and Healthy New Year to all our
Vietnam Veterans and families.
From: Team VVAA Vic Branch.*

