



Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia Victorian Branch Inc.

NEWS BULLETIN

MARCH 2026

AUSTRALIAN ARMY OPEN DAY PUCKAPUNYAL MILITARY AREA “PUCKA”



Unveiling of a Plaque provided by VVAA Victorian Branch commemorating all conscripts who trained at 2 Recruit Training Battalion (2RTB) between 1965 – 1972.

Honour the dead but fight like hell for the living

ESB-VIC



VVAA Victorian State Branch—Executive

ABN: 34 750 672 219



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VVAA Victorian Branch

STATE OFFICE:

Please note that the State Office, formerly located at Anzac House, Melbourne is **now closed**.

Direct all enquiries to State Secretary/Treasurer/
Membership as below.

DO NOT send mail to Anzac House.

MEMBERSHIP:

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AUSTRALIA

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Honour the dead but fight like hell for the living

FROM THE PRESIDENT



So, our time in ANZAC House has ended with the RSL needing our office space. Our time in ANZAC House started when Peter Liefman, as Vic. State President, accepted an invitation from RSL President and strong Vietnam vet supporter MAJGEN David McLachlan. The

move into ANZAC House came at a time when it was fair to say that the relationship between us and the RSL was strained. Happily, things improved and our presence in ANZAC House was beneficial to both parties. We enjoyed access to our own office space, mail and phone service, access to RSL internet service and a regular meeting room. New arrangements have been made for Branch contact information. Branch documents have been sorted and important information will be digitized and provided to the NVVM.

The unveiling of the 2RTB plaque was a great success, the most important part of our plaque program. The support from the Puckapunyal Army staff was exceptional, nothing was too much trouble, particularly from Master Gunner and RSM of the Royal Australian Corps of Artillery WO1 Tony Charles.

Your executive has provided financial support to a Vietnam Transport Platoon Association reunion in Echuca to help to meet the cost of fuel for a beautifully restored MK3 truck to be driven from Melbourne to the reunion.

We also agreed to make a small donation to the Victorian Women's Royal Australian Army Corps (WRAAC) Association to help them continue their activities. For those not aware of the WRAAC story, women joining the Army prior to 1985 were allotted to WRAAC, then posted to various Army units according to their skills, while remaining part of WRAAC. From 1985, women are allocated to Army Corps. I served with WRAAC members in Signals Intelligence units in Australia and overseas, they were outstanding at their craft.

I attended a few Sub-Branch AGM's, and a similar theme was experienced; issues with filling committee positions, finding appropriate activities and staying connected with our ageing membership. Let us keep our key role uppermost in our thoughts and efforts; fighting like hell for the living, we all have a role to play.

Bob Elworthy



STATE OFFICE:

Please note that the VVA Vic Branch State Office, formerly located at Anzac House, Melbourne has **now closed**.

Direct all enquiries to State Secretary/ Treasurer/ Membership as detailed on Page 2 of this Edition of FSB-Vic

or VVA Vic Branch website

vvaavic.org.au

ROBERT WINTHER OAM - SALUTING 60 YEARS OF SERVICE

This February, Robert Winther OAM reached the incredible milestone of 60 Years of Service after beginning work with the Repatriation Commission (Dept of Veterans' Affairs - DVA) in February 1966.

Robert's story began long before he joined the Repatriation Commission (DVA) in 1966. He is the son of a World War II veteran who served at Kokoda. In 1961, when Rob's father was tragically killed in a car accident his family was cared for by Legacy. The Legatee who cared for his family also worked for the Repatriation Commission, and through that influence Robert decided to also go in that direction.

Above: The Prime Minister congratulates Robert



with a surprise visit.

He also stepped into significant operational leadership — including overseeing major building projects and coordinating the relocation of 600 staff into a 12-storey facility on St Kilda Road following a fire.

At Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital, Robert moved into senior administrative roles, where he influenced facilities planning, master planning and major redevelopment projects. He played an important role in positioning the Repat for its transfer into the Victorian public hospital system and the eventual amalgamation with the Austin Hospital in 1995.

When that amalgamation occurred, Robert worked to consolidate services and ensure continuity.

Then in 1996, he was given a pivotal responsibility — to ensure the veteran community continued to feel supported during this period of change. He chose the title of Veteran Liaison Officer and was the first in the country.

For decades, Robert has led commemorative services. He has been instrumental in establishing the Anzac Memorial Chapel and the Remembrance Garden. He has influenced the Duckboard Function Centre and multiple key buildings, including the Health and Rehabilitation Centre and the Coral-Balmoral Building. He has supported Ward 17 and many other wards. Robert contributed to the corporate identity during amalgamation and has championed gardens, art programs, books and fundraising initiatives.

Recently, he has served as MC at the Premier's Anzac Day Lunch in 2024 and 2025, with another invitation for 2026.

But perhaps Rob's greatest contribution is not any one building or project. It is culture. Robert preserves the spirit of the Repat.

He ensures veterans remain visible and honoured and he builds community. And through every change and challenge, he remains positive and persistent.

Sixty years of service is rare. Sixty years of service that strengthens Care, Compassion, Community and

ROBERT WINTHER OAM—SALUTING 60 YEARS OF SERVICE

Culture is exceptional.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese stopped in to congratulate Robert, along with Kate Thwaites MP, Member for Jagajaga and Helen Coleman who represented Anthony Carabines, Minister for Police.

Robert still has a busy future ahead. Two books are due. One, *The Veteran Era* is due for release in August this year and the other, a book on the Austin Hospital should be available in 2027. He is having a bronze bust of Elizabeth Austin commissioned. Veteran Liaison are looking to host their last Vietnam Veterans Day Service on 17 August 2026. As Chair of the Weary Dunlop Foundation he is assisting with it's wind up this year. Robert will be involved with the never ending history and heritage across Austin Health along with a new building project in Ward 17. When all of this comes to fruition, you'll probably still see Robert in the Remembrance Garden, keeping the plaques clean or having a coffee. When that time comes, join him for a chat and let him regale you with stories of his 60+ years at the Repat.



Honour the dead but fight like hell for the living

AUSTRALIAN ARMY OPEN DAY

PLAQUE UNVEILING—PUCKA

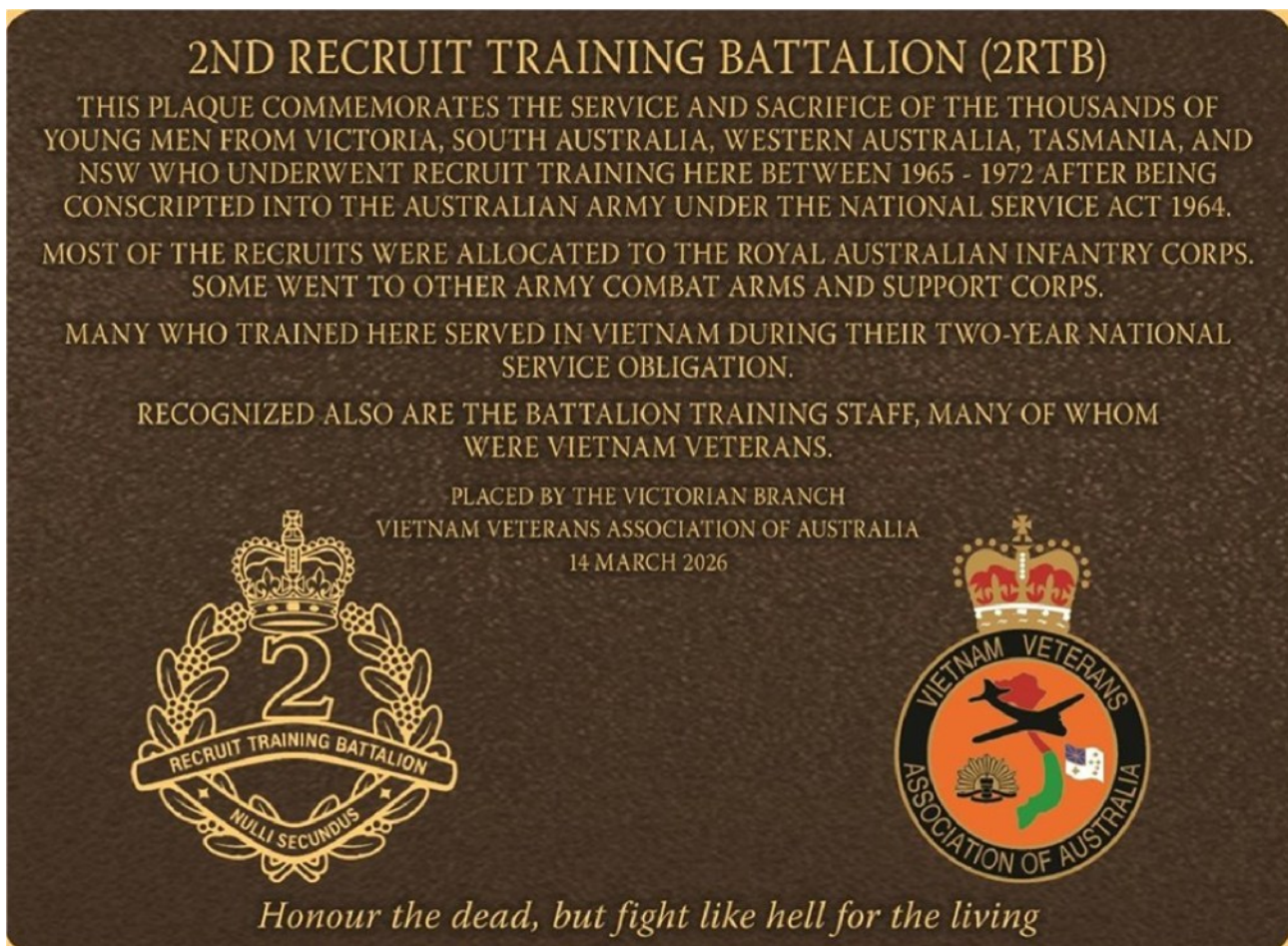
On March 14th this year, *Australian Army Open Day* at *Puckapunyal Military Area “Pucka”* began with the unveiling of a Plaque provided by VVAA Victorian Branch commemorating all conscripts who trained at 2 Recruit Training Battalion (2RTB) between 1965 – 1972.

The day include a variety of static and dynamic displays showcasing various capabilities and public access to the ‘*Payne of Valour*’ exhibit.

The event also featured rides on selected vehicles and the Annual National Servicemen’s Day gathering.

A big thanks to WO1 Tony Charles, Regimental Master Gunner, RSM Royal Regiment of Artillery and his Team who provided guidance and support for the occasion. They also sourced and arranged placement of the rock on which the Plaque is mounted..

Quite a nostalgic occasion for all of us who trained and served at Pucka.



PLAQUE UNVEILING—PUCKA



VVAA Victorian State President Bob Elworthy AM address.



WO1 Tony Charles Regimental Master Gunner RSM Royal Regiment of Artillery addresses those gathered.



Chaplain Sion Hughes MC delivering Dedication and blessing.

Placing of a Plaque within the Puckapunyal Military Area completes a program carried out by VVAA Victorian Branch to have Plaques placed at sites around Victoria where Vietnam Veterans trained/served or carried out Veteran Welfare tasks e.g. VVAA Victorian Branch Sub Branches. These Plaques will provide a legacy for generations that follow us and be a source of archival education material about Vietnam Veterans and Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War.

LEST WE FORGET



Honour the dead but fight like hell for the living

Senate Inquiry—Defence Estate Sell-off.

RSL launches National Petition for Senate Inquiry into Defence Estate Sell-off.

MEDIA RELEASE

9 March 2026

For immediate release

Australia's largest and oldest veteran organisation has launched a national petition calling for a Senate Inquiry into the Government's planned sale of Defence properties around the country.

The Returned & Services League of Australia says while it understands the strategic logic of the proposed divestment of some 67 Defence Estate sites and supports the modernisation of Defence infrastructure, the decision needs more careful consideration.

RSL Australia National President Peter Tinley AM says the League wants the Senate Standing Committees on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade to thoroughly examine the proposed sell-off and look at the management, use and disposal of the Defence estate assets to be put up for sale.

"As we said when the Government made its announcement of 4 February, these aren't empty paddocks on a spreadsheet - they're places where Australians learned to soldier, where bonds of mateship were forged, and where generations prepared to defend this nation," Mr Tinley said.

"The Government needs to tap the brakes here and take a breath. Because once these sites are gone, they're gone forever. A Senate Inquiry will provide that necessary oversight and caution.

"The Government announced it would divest 67 Defence estate sites representing the most significant reform to the Defence estate in Australian history, and they made this announcement without public consultation or the opportunity for stakeholders to respond to the plan," he said.

"Many veterans and serving members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) have deep connections to the identified sites and many of the sites are still used by ADF personnel and/or hold significant heritage value to the Australian community.

"Yet, the Government's decision to sell these assets was based on the Defence Estate Audit completed in 2023, and does not seem to have considered recent developments in Australia's strategic circumstances, reserve force structure or mobilisation requirements; nor does it detail clear transition arrangements for sites that are used by permanent forces, reserve units and cadet organisations."

Peter Tinley said the Senate Inquiry must require the Government to clearly identify and set out the reasons for the divestment decisions, how its planning aligns with Australia's defence needs, the adequacy of transition arrangements, the suitability of each asset for divestment, and assumptions used to cost returns from divestment; and consider public submissions on use, value and connections to the sites.

"The Petition is now live on the RSL Australia website and is being promoted through State Branches, the League's nearly 1,100 sub-branches throughout Australia and its social media channels. The Petition will be open for signatures for two weeks and then presented to the Senate.

"This proposed sell-off must be done correctly. These sites belong to all Australians - past, present and future and we must ensure veteran voices are heard and our military heritage is properly protected. A Senate Inquiry will help achieve this," Peter Tinley said.

MEDIA CONTACT RSL AUSTRALIA

Tony Harrison

0417 318 178

tony.harrison@rsl.org.au

See the Petition at:

[Defence Estate Petition — RSL Australia](#)

Vietnam Veterans Commemorative Walk in Seymour.

The VVAA Mitchell Sub-Branch are currently fundraising to create five Victoria Cross panels for the *Vietnam Veterans Commemorative Walk in Seymour (SCW)*.

Pte Richard Norden was recently posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross and this necessitates changing the SCW Victoria Cross memorial as it cannot be added to. The proposed design, in glass, is shown below. Each man will be almost life-size, adding to the larger-than-life effect.

Visitors will be able to look into the eyes of these special men, and learn about their personalities, service history, and the action(s) that precipitated the awarding of the Victoria Cross. The design is consistent with, and sympathetic to, the design of the long winding glass wall whilst allowing for further panels to be added in the future.

The Walk is many things to people. With the trees and grasses now matured, veterans, their families and friends tell us that it is a place of peace and healing, as we hoped it would be for them. It is also where they can find the names of their loved ones, remembered forever on this public memorial in a 24-hour accessible space, whilst the photographs evoke memories which are then brought to light and those experiences discussed. It has

become very significant in the lives of veterans all over Australia, and many return again and again to visit.

For others the natural environment of The SCW is a valuable space to relax, a place to educate their families, a beautiful place in which to have a picnic, or to stop and exercise during a road trip. The reasons are numerous, but all visits are because *The Walk* is a beautiful place to linger, with the benefit of learning something of our history at the same time.

The *Vietnam Veterans Commemorative Walk* is a source of great pride for the town and has brought thousands of people into Seymour each year since its completion twelve years ago. *The Walk* is also a constant and regular destination for bus holiday tours, including occasional school tours as well. The town is now jumping on weekends as well as through the week with the constant visitors to *The Walk*, visitors who often then choose to stay to see our other historic military sites and other venues.

DONATIONS can be made to:

Account Name : Vietnam Veterans Commemorative Walk

Bank Name: GMCU

BSB: 803-078

Account No. : 100 060 747



Honour the dead but fight like hell for the living

NATIONAL VIETNAM VETERANS MUSEUM

The *National Vietnam Veterans Museum* at Phillip Island has a fresh coat of paint on the front of the building courtesy of *Haymes Paints Ballarat*.

Now bright orange- a highly appropriate colour - the front is certainly an eye-catcher for anyone driving along the road. Thanks Haymes Paints, a great Aussie company.

Why not call in to the Museum and see the new look and the vast array of exhibits.



Picture of the Museum at the time it was officially opened by the Victorian Premier The Hon Steve Bracks MP on Friday 9 March 2007.

WEBSITE:

[National Vietnam Veterans Museum](#)

BECOME A MEMBER:

[Become a Member – National Vietnam Veterans Museum](#)



March 2026



VVAA VICTORIAN BRANCH MEETINGS 2026



VVAA VICTORIAN BRANCH

MEETINGS CALENDAR 2026

VVAA Victorian Branch State Council and VVAA National.

EFFECTIVE 1 JANUARY 2026 > 31 DECEMBER 2026 (Subject to change)

State Office no longer manned – all calls diverted to State Secretary.	
11 February	State Executive meeting (10.00am Anzac House)
	State Executive meeting (10.00am Anzac House)
22 April	State Executive meeting (10.00am Anzac House)
3 June	State Executive meeting (10.00am Anzac House)
8 July	State Executive meeting (10.00am Anzac House)
5 August	State Executive meeting (10.00am Anzac House)
30 September	State Executive meeting (10.00am Anzac House)
4 November	State Executive meeting (10.00am Anzac House)
16 December	State Executive meeting (10.00am Anzac House)
27-28 February	State Council Meeting - Bendigo
19-20 June	State Congress (AGM) & Council Meeting - Bendigo
30-31 October	State Council Meeting - Bendigo
6 - 8 May	National Congress/Council Meeting
23-24 October	National Council Meeting



Honour the dead but fight like hell for the living



**VIETNAM VETERANS
ASSOCIATION OF
AUSTRALIA VICTORIAN
BRANCH INC.**

Anzac House

L3, 4 Collins St

MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Em: office@vvaavic.org.au



VIETNAM VETERANS DAY

10:00 > 12:00

TUESDAY 18th AUGUST 2026

MELBOURNE SHRINE OF REMEMBRANCE

Honour the Dead but Fight Like Hell for the Living