

*This Newsletter  
is a publication  
of the Geelong &  
District Sub-  
Branch of the  
Vietnam Veter-  
ans Association  
of Australia*



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# The Slouch Hat

## Moving Service for Coral/Balmoral

On 25 May, the Sub-Branch held a commemoration service at its Memorial in North Geelong to coincide with the 40th Anniversary of the Battles of Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral in South Vietnam. This was a service for veterans and their families, particularly veterans who took part in those battles, and an opportunity for us all to remember the sacrifice paid by those who lost their lives and of the continuing suffering by those who were physically or psychologically wounded by the events of those days. Following the service we adjourned to Osborne House overlooking Corio Bay for a barbecue lunch, a few drinks and a chance to reflect on the lives of departed friends and comrades. It was particularly heartening to meet

a number of veterans who had not previously attended a service to our memorial. My sincere thanks to the 70 or so people (vets, spouses, friends) who



attended the service and to the Military History Group, Air force, Army and Navy cadets and Bugler Christine Bowden, all of whom provided a fitting contribution to the occasion. And to the usual suspects in Frank, Mick Hoare, Nigel, Bernard all of whom stepped up to the plate and got things organised. And thanks also to Darby who organised the cadets for the barbecue. As it turned out, the after ser-

vice luncheon was a dry run for our Veteran's Day Service and March in August. This means that instead of having to drive off elsewhere for our after service fellowship we need only walk the few hundred metres down the road to Osborne House. Hopefully the weather will be kind and we can congregate on the grassed area overlooking the bay; but if not we have the good sized indoor facility with tables and chairs to sit at for lunch. We are extremely grateful to the Osborne Park Association for assisting us on the day and to CREATE, the current lessee of the building for allowing us use of the premises.



## Forthcoming Events

- **Vietnam Veterans Day: Saturday/Sunday 16/17 August Geelong (Details Inside)**
- Monday 18 August Melbourne Shrine
- Tombstone Territory—Teesdale (Fundraising Day for Geelong Veterans Welfare Centre and GDVVAA Sunday 31 August (Contact Darby Drennan at Welfare Centre for details)

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*Honour The Dead And Fight Like Hell For The Living*

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**Your Committee at Work!**

The Executive Committee is made up of the President, the two Vice-Presidents, the Treasurer and the Secretary. Meets monthly.

The Full Committee consists of the executive and remaining committee members excusing the Minute Secretary. Meets monthly depending on level of business and input required.

A general meeting for all members is held on the second Monday of each month. Venue is normally the Geelong RSL 7 for 7.30pm. Usually try to finish by 9.00 pm to allow some social discourse. Two daytime meetings are usually held throughout the year at venues throughout the Geelong region and advised in our electronic newsletter "Listen Up" and in The Slouch Hat.

# Letter to All Vietnam Veterans



In August, we will again host a range of activities to coincide with our national Vietnam Veterans Day. While the format of these activities has not changed for a number of years, it doesn't mean that there is any less work for the small group of volunteers who work their backsides off organising these events. As an organisation we take the work of "**Honouring the Dead, And Fighting Like Hell for the Living**" to heart but we can only do it with your support. Presently, we have almost 200 members in our Sub-Branch and a further 50 or so on our mailing list (ex-members, lapsed members). However, the numbers are immaterial if we can't get veterans to help other veterans to run these activities or to support those that do. But you can **show your support by taking part in any or all of the listed activities**. So guys, we aren't asking you for a year-long commitment just one weekend a year. While it is always a bit of a struggle to get people on to committees, it can be made easier if people see that the work of the few is appreciated by the wider membership.

Attached is the program for August. You will note that there are a few

changes to the past years programs. For starters, our **Annual Dinner** will be held in the Fred Flanagan Room at Kardinia Park and we have a senior serving Army officer coming from Canberra to be our guest speaker. Major General Steve Meekin is one of Australia's foremost military experts on Iraq and was involved in the search for WMD on the ground in Iraq in 2003. Come and hear what he has to say about that and current operations elsewhere in the world. Steve is also a military historian and will speak on the contribution of Coral/Balmoral to army doctrine. Those of you who attended the T&PI dinner at the venue will know that it is a quality meal. The sub-branch will subsidise each of its members (and spouses/partners) to the tune of \$8.50 per head making it a cost of \$40 per head for a great three-course meal.

Our **Sunday Church Service** is at the Uniting Church in Newtown and promises to be a moving event. Even those of us who haven't darkened the door of a church for many years get something out of these services. But most of all they are a reminder to others in our community of the sacrifice paid by veterans.

Our **March and Service** at the memorial in

North Geelong starts 30 minutes earlier this year with a step-off around 12.30pm. Immediately following the service we will adjourn to Osborne House for a BBQ lunch (same format as for Long Tan celebrations two years ago).

As I mentioned earlier the only thing we ask of you is your support on the day. While offers of help before then are always welcome, a good roll-up to any of the activities shows the wider community that we are a group of individuals who have shared a common experience and that we are always prepared to "**Honour the Dead and Fight Like Hell for the Living**".

*"Major General Steve Meekin is one of Australia's foremost military experts on Iraq and was involved in the search for WMD on the ground in Iraq in 2003"*



# Vietnam Veteran's Day Activities

## Annual Dinner:

Saturday 16 August 2008

6.30 for 7.00 PM

Fred Flanagan Room  
Skilled Stadium, Kardinia Park



## Guest Speaker

Major General Steve Meekin, Deputy Director Intelligence, Defence Signals Directorate, and Senior Intelligence Officer of the Australian Army. Steve will speak on his involvement in the search for WMD in Iraq in 2003, ADF support to Australian forces currently deployed overseas in the Middle East & elsewhere and the contribution of the Battle of Coral/Balmoral to Australian Army history and doctrine.

## Tickets/Seating

There are only six tables (groups of 10) left at this early stage – so don't delay. Get a group together or call the secretary and let him-know you want to attend.

There is a big discount for members and partners.

## **Only \$40 per head for a fantastic 3-Course Meal**

People with special dietary needs are urged to contact Lyn Den Besten

**Contact Bruce Ellis on 5267 3180 or Lyn Den Besten on 5243 1428.**

All other guests and partners pay \$48.50 per head

**THIS IS A BLACK TIE EVENT. MINIATURES TO BE WORN PLEASE.**

**BUT, THE BLACK TIE IS OPTIONAL SO DON'T BE PUT OFF.**



*“There is a big discount for members and spouses. One of the best meals you will get dining out in Geelong”*

**Church Service**

Sunday 17 August 2008 10.00 am

Uniting Church, Noble Street, Newtown

(In keeping with our policy of spreading our presence around all of Geelong's churches)

These services are usually very moving events and this year will be no exception. Wear your large gongs!

**March & Service**

Sunday 17 August 2008

12.15 form up

12.30 Step-Off from Osborne House

12.45 Memorial Service - Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Melbourne Rd, North Geelong (Osborne Park)

Wear your large gongs. If you need them mounted there are a number of people who can do that for you – just ask the secretary for some names.

**Lunch**

13.15 - 15.30

Following our Service, a barbeque lunch will be held in Osborne House and on the grassed area overlooking Corio Bay. Coffee, Tea, Softies, Beer and Wine will be available with your meal. Lunch is a gold coin donation and drinks will be sold by ticket at cost. Memorabilia and raffle tickets will be sold on the day.

*If you need  
your gongs  
mounted,  
please  
contact the  
secretary  
who will  
provide  
some  
names”*

PLEASE SUPPORT YOUR FELLOW VETERANS WHO LOOK FORWARD TO THEIR “ONE DAY OF THE YEAR” AND MAKE AN EFFORT TO ATTEND THE WEEKEND’S EVENTS.





# Contribution courtesy of Mick Hoare

Hi All, The attached poem was written some time ago by an old mate, Steve Pearce, with whom I served in 4RAR in Townsville and Vietnam. I hadn't seen nor heard of Steve since October 1971 but I found his email address in a 4RAR website guest book this week and we have re-established contact after all these years. Steve was a regular soldier and had just turned 19 when he arrived in Vietnam on the Sydney in May 1971. The funeral Steve refers to was for Private Timothy Joseph Cutcliffe, who was KIA with 2RAR in Vietnam on 25/8/1967, aged 21 years, and was buried in Orange NSW. Steve attended the funeral while he was undertaking Infantry Corps training. I am sure that we can all relate to the apprehensions and emotions expressed in this poem Cheers.....Mick

## Keeping Guard— by Stephen Pearce

*He was an honour guard, at the funeral in town  
Slouch hat on, rifle gleaming, resplendent khaki brown  
The loud roar of the salvos, pierced the small town's quiet,  
Announcing the finality, of J T Cutcliffe's plight  
The sharp bark of the rifles echoed through the park, and  
The grief etched mourner's faces, conveyed emotions stark,  
For the loss of this young soldier at the age of twenty one  
And the senseless futile killing, of the town's beloved son*

*He was a colour guard, at the church on Denham hill,  
An honour he's told, to bear the flag, on Regimental drill  
He stood tall and proud, as the priest blessed and prayed  
And accepted the care of the rifleman's braid  
The Sydney loomed to the south of the isle, a ghostly silhouette  
And heightened his excitement amidst some feelings of regret  
The ancient landing craft were crammed up to the door, as  
The regiment of young Australians, was ferried from the shore*

*He was a perimeter guard, at the Australian forces' base,  
barbed wire alarmed, claymores armed, covering the space  
Two shifts each night, while fire-flies shone bright, and  
the wild boars food foraging gave all cause for fright  
Nineteen years old and a world away from home, in that  
dark sandbagged bunker, his maturity fast grown  
Scared, tired and lonely but determined to retain, the  
friendship and respect, of his mates who shared the strain*

*Seven months on, duty done, the Vung Tau ferry waits,  
a Chinook ride to the flight deck from Nui Dat's wire gates  
The small boats constantly circle, alert despite the lull,  
and stun grenade-blasts drum, against the ship's steel hull  
The carrier steamed for Sydney, unhurriedly, as though  
buffering east from west, war from peace and supposed friend from  
foe*

*Time to think, time to rest, time to reflect on the nine,  
sadly taken home early, part of fate's cruel design  
He marched with pride, mates at his side, along the city street,  
and tried for his life to fathom why Australians failed to greet  
He went on leave, travelled home, then discharged from the force,  
but the stigma wouldn't leave him, despite this chosen course  
His unit overseas, had been tagged "The Fighting Fourth"  
but his fight with inner demons left him questioning his worth  
His memories, fears and failings, all caused him to retreat,  
until broken, and grasping the neck of the bottle, he accepted his  
defeat*

*He was a security guard at the shopping centre mall,  
it was the only job deemed suited, if he wanted work at all  
He often talks of the death of Mister Cutcliffe's son,  
and how ironic it is, that he turned out, to be the lucky one*





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**"Honour The Dead And Fight Like  
Hell For The Living"**

## Honour The Dead And Fight Like Hell For The Living

**Disclaimer:** the material contained in this newsletter 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 this newsletter without considering and, if necessary, taking appropriate professional advice upon his or her own particular circumstances. The VVAA, the authors and the editor expressly disclaim all and any liability to any person 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 this newsletter.

You may find some errors in this Newsletter. That is in keeping with our policy of having something for everyone