



VIETNAM VETERANS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA GEELONG & DISTRICT BRANCH



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THE SLOUCH HAT NEWSLETTER

JULY 2018

Welcome to the “new look” Geelong and District Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia Newsletter. The newsletter will be produced periodically to keep members informed as to what is planned in the way of upcoming events, both regular and special, and to showcase events that have taken place and the people participating in those events.

This new style of newsletter, or should it be more appropriately classified as this “retro” newsletter, is more in keeping with our aim to lower some operating costs, and to redirect the money otherwise spent on printing costs, into more important and beneficial endeavours.



Don't forget that our new Vietnam Veterans Centre is where our meetings are held, or you can just drop-in for a chat and a coffee. The centre is open every Monday, Tuesday and Thursday (except public holidays), at:

31 Mt. Pleasant Road, Belmont. Telephone: **03 52433700.**

If you have a few minutes to spare, consider dropping in to the centre for a chat and a coffee, or update yourself with the latest gossip. Also, we are always looking for a few more volunteers to keep the centre open, so if you have a free day, and would like to be a part of the team, call or drop in and find out more about how you can help.

****The Geelong Surf Coast Veterans Centre has a new home. For all matters relating to welfare and pensions call on 035222 6003, all visit the centre at 14 Griffith Street, Grovedale.**

PRESIDENTS REPORT

New Vietnam Veterans Centre

Over the holiday break we moved into our new Vietnam Veterans Centre in Belmont. A team of workers from the Committee hung pictures, flags and other memorabilia to make it look like 'our' place. Since then we have had meetings, including the 2018 AGM, in the new meeting room.

The Vietnam Veterans Centre is open three days a week (Monday, Tuesday and Thursday). It is a casual drop-in Centre and there is always someone to have a chat with over a cup of tea /coffee. Our fortnightly Friday 'Pay Day' lunches are still held at the North Geelong Football/Cricket clubrooms. All members are welcome to these lunches, which represent great value and help support the Association

I am very grateful to all those who stood for positions on the Executive and Committee, we have an energetic and capable team leading the G & DVVAA in 2018.

Presentations

It was a great honour to award Life Membership certificates and badges to Dorothy Cunningham and Kevin Benson, both of whom have made very significant contributions to the Geelong Association over many years.

This year the Tommy Simpson Award was presented to Bruno Tarticchio for his work in helping Frank with the Pako BBQs and the Golf Day. Over the years there have also been many other contributions on the electrical and security side that Bruno has provided.

At the State Congress in February Ken Baker was awarded State Life Membership for his outstanding work as part of the 50th Anniversary of Long Tan commemorations, especially his work on the Graveside Vigils. We are very lucky to have such a capable and focussed member as our Vice President.

Work on Stage 3 of the Vietnam Veterans Avenue of Honour Project continues, and hopefully will be finished this year. We started this project in 2014 and have never stopped. I believe the Geelong Association will leave a significant and lasting social, historical and cultural memorial for the people of Geelong and visitors. Ken Baker, and his Committee, have been tireless in their work to see the whole project completed.

Osborne House Update

Work at Osborne House continues at a snail's pace. We were fortunate that our Museum was the first to have all items cleaned, removed and safely stored. All our furniture, kitchen items and miscellaneous bits and pieces are now in storage. We haven't been given a timeline by the City of Greater Geelong and no decisions have been made in the regard to the future of Osborne House. Before anything happens, the building must be restored to a safe condition, which includes bringing up to date with current building regulations and standards. Watch this space for news!

The RSL (Vic.) are in the process of developing their new Strategic Plan 2020 - 2030 and are consulting RSL members across the State to determine how best the RSL can serve its members. Another aspect of this consultation period is the review of the Regional Veterans Centre Project. Developed by John Prince over 20 years ago, the Project is a joint venture between the RSL (Vic.) and the VVAA. While the nature of the work at these Centres remains essentially the same, namely advice on welfare, pensions and advocacy, the method of delivery needs to change in the light of the fact that the Advocates are ageing, and client needs are different, and that fewer younger veterans have the time or interest to step-up to the role as Advocates. It is inevitable that some Regional Centres will close or amalgamate with others. There are already paid Advocates at RSL Vic and it seems, this will be the model of welfare provision into the future. We are promised full consultation and feedback as the Review develops, but as in the case of the VAN Offices, the style of veteran support will be different in the years to come.

On this problem of a lack of Advocates the DVA have launched a consultative process titled - "Advocacy and Support Services Scoping Study". I would encourage any member who has had to deal with the DVA, through their Pension Officer or Advocate, to make a submission. Submissions can be emailed to the

gdvvaa@gmail.com and we will forward them to Mr. Robert Cornall AO, Chairman of the scoping study. These submissions must be in by mid-2018.

ANZAC Day 2018

Members will recall that last year the G & DVVAA were the auspice body for the first ANZAC Dawn service at Eastern Beach. This year with a bigger stage and more powerful PA system the turn- out was remarkable, over 6,000! The citizens of Geelong certainly want and support this event in their thousands. The future of this Memorial Service may fall into our hands, as the Geelong RSL already do a mammoth job on this special day for war veterans.

As in previous years the G & DVVAA was well represented at various ceremonies across our Region at pre-dawn and dawn services, at wreath laying ceremonies, at Church services and at the March and service in Johnston Park.

The G & DVVAA ANZAC lunch was held at the North Geelong Football clubrooms and as usual was well attended.

The presentation of the ANZAC Day Vietnam Medals at the South Barwon Vs St. Joseph's football and netball games was held at McDonald Reserve

Financial Memberships

We have a blitz on membership renewals as many members have forgotten to renew and we need to keep our membership lists up to date. Please ensure you are a financial member by checking with the VV Centre if you are unsure. We will be forced to delist un-financial members and they will be required to re-join by filling in a new Application for Membership form. Please make this a priority.

May I thank Neil Daw who has taken on the job of putting this newsletter together, it is greatly appreciated.

Rieny Nieuwenhof
President

VICE PRESIDENTS REPORT

President Rieny and I met recently with Richard Marles to outline Stage 3 of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Project in North Geelong, and to request for his support to the DVA Grants Department for the \$20,000 application. He was very impressed with the overall result of the total work to date, and the effort made by the Sub-branch in leaving such a legacy to the citizens of Geelong and district of that era. Richard would be presenting our case in his constituency report to the Parliament highlighting this very important and now historic site in Geelong. Richard further thought it would be a good idea to invite the Australian War Memorial chief, Brendan Nelson, to unveil the final stage later in the year, and make it a special event for Geelong. He would also follow up with the Minister Darren Chester and see when the application would be processed. A copy of Richard Marles letter to the Department dated May 30th, 2018 has been received, as well as acknowledgement of the grant application.

Following the Committee Meeting on May 22nd, 2018, we have finalised the concept drawings for the two panels at each end of the Avenue of Honour. These will be passed on to Chris Kopec, the panel designer, to prepare once funding has been received. Chris has been under pressure lately, and I expect to meet with him later this month to start preparation of the Artillery panel, it being the darkest and busiest of the photos, and the need to lighten off the background for the words to be able to be displayed. Also, I am attempting to get a full-sized paper print (i.e.: 600mm x 450mm) of the Navy panel to allow us all to get the panel in perspective.

Cheers

Ken Baker, VP.

News You May Have Missed

Latest News from The Victorian Government: *The free public transport travel arrangement which has applied to ANZAC Day, has now been extended to include Vietnam Veterans Day and Remembrance Day. This includes Veterans, war widows, school students, ADF cadets, Scouts and Girl Guides, and serving ADF personnel. Veterans will also receive free travel on public transport during Veterans Health Week. This applies Victoria wide. To receive the free travel, you must be wearing your medals, or be in uniform, or produce a membership or valid I.D. card.*

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National Volunteers Week ran from May 21st to May 27th, 2018. The Victorian Government has announced that they have allocated \$500,000 in the 2018/2019 Victorian Budget to make it easier and simpler for volunteers to do what they do best. With the theme "Give a little, change a lot", over the next two years the budget investment will help fulfil the strategic priorities of the Ministerial Council of Volunteers, which works to improve volunteering experiences and create opportunities for the community. Locals in Geelong are reminded that there's still time to nominate for the 2018 Premiers Volunteer Champion Awards.

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The National Vietnam Veterans Museum, on Phillip Island, Victoria, contains a magnificent collection of memorabilia and artefacts donated by Veterans and their families, and each of the services. It has grown over the years to the point that a new, much larger museum is required to house the personal items, photos and machines that make up the displays. Recently, the Turnbull Government announced that it is providing \$5 million towards the targeted cost of \$35 million needed to make this new museum a reality, with additional funds being sought from the States and Territories, our allies, industry stakeholders, philanthropists and eventually, the Australian public. Stay tuned for further information as this great event unfolds.

Don't forget that if you, family or friends, are venturing down in the direction of Phillip Island, make a point of visiting the museum. It's a fascinating and moving experience. National Vietnam Veterans Museum, 25 Veterans Drive, Newhaven, Phillip Island.

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National commemorative services were held in Canberra (Sunday May 13th, 2018) and Townsville, to mark the 50th anniversary of the **Battles at Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral**. The two Fire Support Bases were established north of Bien Hoa – Coral on May 12th, 1968 and Balmoral a short time later – to supply artillery, mortar and armoured support for troops of 1 RAR and 3 RAR during operations targeting the supply lines of the NVA and Viet Cong between North Vietnam and Saigon. During the period 12th May to 6th June, 1968 (when all troops returned to Nui Dat), 26 Australians were killed and 99 were wounded.

Each of the commemorative services were very well attended, renewing many friendships and paying respect to all those involved in the battles. In Canberra on Sunday May 13th, 2018, approximately 800 to 1000 personnel undertook the short march in Anzac Parade to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial for the commemorative service, followed by a luncheon at the Convention Centre. In May 2018, members of the 1 ATF and associated units deployed to the Area of Operations SURFERS during the Battles of Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral, were recognised for extraordinary gallantry with the Unit Citation of Gallantry. These units include: 1 ATF (Forward), 1 RAR, 3 RAR, A Sqn 3rd Cav Regt, C Sqn 1st Armoured Regt, 12th Field Regt RRAA, and 1st Field Sqn RAE.

We congratulate all members who were performing their duties as part of these units and encourage them to apply for their individual citation. We especially acknowledge the following members of the G.& DVVAA, Graham Christie, Bruce Ellis, Chris Johnson, Lyall Mills, Chris Schaper, Phillip Mulgrew, Frank Cunningham and Allan Trezise, for the duties they performed at FSB's Coral and Balmoral.

DATES TO REMEMBER

Meetings:

Tuesday June 12th, 2018.

Monday July 9th, 2018.

Monday August 11th, 2018.

Monday September 10th, 2018.

** All at 9.30am, Vietnam Veterans Centre, 31 Mt Pleasant Road, Belmont.

Pay Day Lunches:

Friday June 1st, 2018.

Friday June 22nd, 2018.

Friday July 6th, 2018.

Friday August 3rd, 2018.

Friday August 17th, 2018.

Friday August 31st, 2018.

** All held at the North Geelong Football Clubrooms, Swinburne Street, North Geelong, commencing at 11.30am.

'Pako BBQ': Don't forget the 'Pako BBQ', 4th Saturday of every month, outside Heritage Meats, 200 Pakington Street, Geelong West.

Special Events:

- Christmas In July, Friday July 27th, 2018.
- Vietnam Veterans Day March and luncheon, North Geelong, Sunday August 12th, 2018.
- The March commencing 10.30am, Princes Highway and Mackey St, North Geelong.
- Vietnam Veterans Day March, Melbourne (at the Shrine), Saturday August 18th, 2018.
- Vietnam Veterans Day March, Queenscliff, commencing 10.30am, Saturday, August 18th, 2018.
- Vietnam Veterans Week Badge sales: August 9th to 17th, 2018.
- Christmas Dinner Dance at Belmont Bowls Club, Saturday November 24th, 2018.

For further information on any of the abovementioned events, please contact our Vietnam Veterans Centre, Belmont, on 03 5243 3700.

ANZAC DAY 2018

Wednesday, April 25th, 2018, ANZAC Day, was fine and clear, and a day spent by many remembering and honouring family, friends and fellow comrades who served or are serving in our Army, Navy and Airforce. Whether their service was during a period of war from our past or the present, or part of a peace keeping program, all people who have served in a time of need and particularly for those who paid the ultimate sacrifice, recognition and respect needs to be shown. Many of our members took part in Anzac Day marches in centres other than Geelong, but the numbers who turned out and marched in Geelong were significant. Increased numbers attended the Dawn Service at Eastern Park which is encouraging for the future. On the next page are a selection of photographs highlighting the members "on parade", and the great support from family and friends for those taking part in the march.



SCHOLARSHIPS

Two Scholarships opportunities are listed below, so please consider them and see if a family member or friend qualifies to make an application.

1. AVCAT 2019 Scholarship: The Australian Veterans Children Assistance Trust (AVCAT) is a national independent charity helping children and grandchildren of ex-service Veterans with the cost of tertiary education. Applications for the 2019 Long Tan Bursary and sponsored scholarships up to \$12,000, managed by AVCAT, open on **18 August, 2018**, and close on **31 October, 2018**.

To be eligible students must be:

- A child, step-child, foster child or grandchild of an ex-serving Australian Veteran
- An Australian citizen or permanent resident
- Enrolled, or planning to enrol in 2019, in a full-time course at an Australian University, TAFE College or Registered Training Organisation
- Receiving, or eligible to receive, Centrelink Youth Allowance or an equivalent means-tested educational payment.

You can contact AVCAT at avcat@dva.gov.au or on 02 92137999. The AVCAT website is at www.avcat.org.au.

2. The Department of Veterans Affairs also issued a Factsheet MRC47, regarding Education Schemes. This provides extensive and detailed information about the Veterans' Children Education Scheme (VCES) and the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act Education and Training Scheme (MRCAETS). There are numerous requirements and qualifications for these schemes with regard to eligibility, allowances, and assistance available.

To find out more contact DVA as follows:

- Phone: 1 800 555 245
- Email: GeneralEnquiries@dva.gov.au
- DVA Website: www.dva.gov.au
- Factsheet Website: www.dva.gov.au/factsheets.

Something to Smile About

A man received the following text from his neighbour:

I am so sorry, Harry. I've been riddled with guilt and have to confess. I have been helping myself to your wife, day and night when you're not around. In fact, more than you. I do not get it at home, but that's no excuse. I can no longer live with the guilt and hope you will accept my promise that it won't happen again. The man, anguished and betrayed, went into his bedroom, grabbed his gun, and without a word, shot his wife and killed her.

A few moments later, a second text came in.

Neighbour: Damn auto correct! I meant 'wifi', not 'wife'

While stitching a cut on the hand of a 75 year old farmer, the doctor struck up a conversation with the old man. Eventually the topic got around to politicians and their role as leaders. The old farmer said, "Well, as I see it, most politicians are 'Post Turtles'".

Not being familiar with the term, the doctor asked him what a 'post turtle' was. The old farmer said, "When you're driving down a country road and you come across a fence post with a turtle balanced on top, that's a post turtle".

The old farmer saw the puzzled look on the doctor's face, so he continued to explain. "You know he didn't get up there by himself, he doesn't belong up there, he doesn't know what to do while he's up there, he's elevated way beyond his ability the function, and you just wonder what kind of half-wit put him up there to begin with."

Best explanation of a politician yet.

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