



VIETNAM VETERANS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA GEELONG & DISTRICT BRANCH



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THE SLOUCH HAT NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2018

Welcome to the October issue of the Geelong and District Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia Newsletter – “*The Slouch Hat.*” Make sure you check out the Geelong Vietnam Vets website (or call our office) for any meetings, lunch dates or events happening in the coming months and for early 2019, as the 2019 Calendar of Events is yet to be finalised.



Don't forget that our new Vietnam Veterans Centre is located at **31 Mt. Pleasant Road, Belmont**, (Telephone: **03 52433700**). The centre is open every Monday, Tuesday and Thursday (except public holidays), a centre where you can call to ask for assistance, have a coffee, a social chat, or to just get the latest gossip.

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 the office, 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**, or call at the centre located at **14 Griffith Street, Grovedale.**

***** A reminder that a renewal form for your 2019 Membership will be included in the December issue of The Slouch Hat – both electronic and posted.***

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

So another August has come and gone, time slips away too quickly these days. Since I last reported to you a number of things have happened. I hope all members received their special Coral Balmoral 50th Anniversary badges. If not, let us know and we will forward one to you.

In July the City of Greater Geelong passed the motion put by Cr. Eddy Kontelj, and seconded by Cr. Anthony Aitkin, that Osborne House will remain in community ownership. The decision at the Council meeting was loudly applauded by the various interested parties present. The next stage will involve the development of a Master Plan for the House, Stables and surrounding park land before the end of this year. The G & DVVAA has been invited to be part of the community Working Party to generate ideas and make recommendations. The Geelong Surf Coast Veterans Centre moved to new offices at 14 Griffith St. Grovedale and apart from some phone troubles all Advocates and Admin. Staff have settled in. The lease is for one year, with an option for a further year. There are many changes afoot in regard to Regional Veteran Centres and the Geelong Centre will be affected, the extent to which we are not sure of at this stage. A few members attended the Veterans Forum, conducted by Sarah Henderson MP, at the Geelong RSL. Major General (R'td) Senator Jim Molan AO DSC spoke of his experiences as a newly elected Senator and his continuing interest in matters related to veterans.

Vice President Brian O'Hara and I attended the VVAA State Council meeting in Horsham in late June. The minutes of this State Council are available at the Geelong VV Centre. Also available are hard copies of Debrief and FSB.

Our 'Pay Day' Lunches at the North Geelong Football/Cricket Club have continued throughout the year with attendances varying as members go north or return from warmer parts. I want to sincerely thank Kevin Benson and his Team who do such a great job. Also to Frank and Dorothy for running the raffles. The 'Christmas in July' lunch was pretty well attended. These events, the Pako BBQs and badge selling are our main sources of income, besides memberships, so it is important that members come along and enjoy each other's company.

Total membership stands at around 280, but as usual there are some who are not financial at the moment despite letters and emails asking them to their financial support.

On your behalf I attended the Region 8a Veterans Welfare Hub meeting at the Geelong RSL. The main speaker was Jeff Jackson (RSL Vic.) who highlighted the changes taking place with Regional Veteran Centres and the shortage of men and women volunteering to take on training to become or remain Advocates.

Within two years or so ESOs will be hard pressed to provide the kind of advocacy veterans have had access to for over 25 years. What the new structure will look like is being determined as I write this report.

As we approached Vietnam Veterans Week there were many things to organise and I thank the Committee members for taking on all sorts of jobs to ensure all was in order. August began with Badge selling in several venues around town. Thanks to David Sikorski and all the volunteers who gave some time to sit in the chilly conditions to sell badges over two weeks.

The GDFL Game of the Round on Saturday 11th August, was the Vietnam Veterans 'Long Tan' match. The games of football and netball were preceded with a brief Memorial service at the North Geelong vs Bannockburn game and later the presentation of the Long Tan medal to the Best on Ground and Best of Court. I thank the GDFL and the North Geelong and Bannockburn Clubs for their support in this event.

Sunday the 12th August Vietnam Veterans gathered for the March along the Vietnam Veterans Avenue of Honour and the Remembrance Service at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, North Geelong. Our keynote was Graham Christie JP. Graham was a radio operator when the FSB Coral came under heavy enemy attack. It was a harrowing, brutal, sustained experience for those at Coral, and later at Balmoral. Graham's account was enthralling and gave a very stark picture of what happened. All veterans are so pleased that after 50 years the heroic efforts of those men were recognised with a Citation for Gallantry.

After the formal proceedings we moved to the North Geelong Football Club rooms for a tasty lunch.

A very small contingent of Geelong members braved the weather to attend the VV Day Service at the Shrine of Remembrance. Our banner was carried by Alan Fleming and Ken Baker. There were 26 young school cadets, each carrying Australian flags, to represent those killed at FSB Coral. The names of those killed were read out by our State President, Bob Elworthy. There was also an audio/visual presentation featuring Graham Christie again, a very moving presentation. I had the honour of laying a wreath at the eternal flame on behalf of the Geelong & District Sub Branch.

There was also a large turn-out at the Queenscliff service and a smaller service at Portarlington. Gary Ryan represented the Geelong SB at the Vietnam Veterans Federation service, held at Christian College. Veterans from Coral were also honoured at a State Government Morning Tea at Parliament House, hosted by the Minister for Veterans, John Erin, MP.

I also had the honour to represent the Geelong Association at the service for the 76th Anniversary of the Kokoda and Isurava battles, at the Osborne Park Cenotaph.

Thanks to Nigel we partnered with the Geelong TPI Association for a special healthy meal during Veterans Health Week, held at the Geelong RSL.

There will be a special Memorial service at St. Paul's Cathedral on the 3rd October. This event has been widely advertised to all VV Sub Branches in Victoria, so we hope there is a really substantial turn-out.

The final State Council meeting was held at Mulwala.

The Remembrance Day service is to be held on 11th November at the Geelong Peace Memorial.

The final major event for the Geelong members will be our Christmas Dinner Dance on 24th November at the Belmont Bowling Club. I hope to see many, many members and their partners present.

The final meeting of the G & DVVAA will be held on Monday 10th Dec. with the VV Centre closing on 13th Dec.

VALE

We lost some members Geoff Bailey, Bill Davidson, Ron Lovelock, Glen Spokes, Thomas Gartlan. We also remember members who are not well at present and hope they recover their health very soon.

May I on your behalf thank Neil Daw for putting this newsletter together and making sure all members have access to it, either on line or as a hard copy. Neil also keeps our website updated.

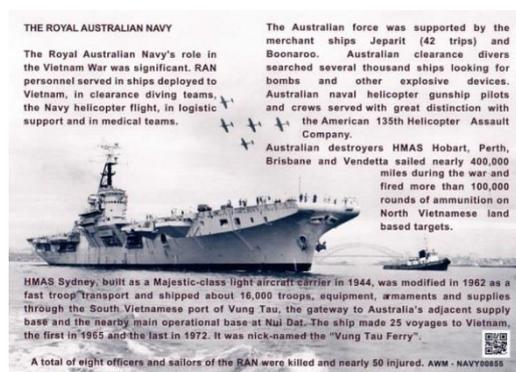
I wish all members and their partners and family, a very Holy Christmas and safe New Year.

Rieny Nieuwenhof
President

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Ken Baker has advised the editor that not a lot has happened in the past couple of months in regard to the nine panels destined for the Avenue of Honour. Local Federal MP, Ms Sarah Henderson has spoken to DVA about the grant application, and has been advised that the applications are still being considered. Some small value applications have already been granted but major grants are still being considered and would be announced in October.

On the right is the completed design for the Navy panel, with other panels in limbo until the grant has been provided so as not to incur additional costs at this stage.



VIETNAM VETERANS BADGE SELLING 2018

The Geelong and District Vietnam Veterans Association were able to raise just over \$11,600 in this year's appeal and an increase over that achieved 2017. Thank you to all that assisted in the selling, for your generous support to the 2018 badge selling appeal.

The 2018 GDVVA badge selling efforts were well supported by 56 volunteers selling at sites in Geelong in Malop St, Highton, Leopold, Queenscliff, Point Lonsdale, Colac, Camperdown and the APCO Service station at Waurin Ponds. This year the National Servicemen's Association assisted by filling in a number of spots and locations and we would like to thank you very much.

The following individuals assisted this year and some assisted on more than one opportunity. Marilyn Hanley, Alan Fleming, Graham Christie, Mick Hoare, Les Grace, Ted & Dot Gray, Joe & Connie Azzopardi, Chris & Jan Johnson, Mal & Margaret McLean, Kevin & Pam Davis, Lance & Dawn Patullo, Sandra Pearce, Philip O'Donnell, Rieny Nieuwenhof, Brian O'Hara, Ken Baker, Dot & Ken Pearce, Nigel Wilson, Mick Canavan, John Meehan, Bill Reid, Kevin Benson, Geoff Eagles, Ron & Mary Brandy, Ray Light, Neil Jose, Lyle McCallum, Geoff Richmond, John Pepperdine, Geoff Miles, John Ockwell, Allan Woodyard, Graeme Unmack, David Unmack, Colin Pearson, Frank Cunningham, Peter Hollows, Peter Foote, Helmut Larson, Neil Smith, Jack Tenabel, Gavin Perkins, Bruno Tarticchio, Bruce Mitchell. I would especially like to thank Gary Ryan and Neil Daw who assisted me in managing sites and manning the APCO site. If I missed anyone please accept my apology, your support was well appreciated.

Thank you again and we look forward to your support in future badge selling opportunities if it is possible.



Malop Street

Highton

PS: We still have some of the Coral / Balmoral badges as well as all the other badges for sale at the GDVVA centre.

VIETNAM VETERANS DAY 2018

On Sunday August 12th, the G&DVVAA Sub-branch held its Commemorative March and Service at the Avenue of Honour and Memorial Precinct, North Geelong. About 40 veterans took part in the march, supported by the Geelong City Band, and lead by veterans who served at Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral. The memorial service was then conducted in windy/cold conditions bravely attended by about 200 Federal and State politicians, local dignitaries and service representatives, veterans, families and friends.



The key-note address was given by Mr Graham Christie, J.P., RSL Vice President and Vietnam Veteran (FSB Coral) and a copy of that very poignant, and stirring speech, can be found on our website. Graham can be seen in the lower/centre photo with Rieny Nieuwenhof and local councillors Ron Nelson and Eddy Kontelj, both of whom are very passionate about the project to refurbish Osborne House and keep it from being sold.

On Saturday August 18th, a small group travelled to Melbourne to attend the Gunfire Breakfast and Commemorative march to the Shrine, and again, scarves and warm coats were the order of the day.



Also on Saturday August 18th, a number of members travelled to Queenscliff and took part in the March and commemorative service organised by the Queenscliff RSL – benefiting from an indoor service at the RSL.



In the photo on the right a group of members (normally only seen on wanted posters with rewards) assemble prior to the Queenscliff march.

News You May Have Missed

Veterans Entitlements Amendment Bill 2018

- The Veterans' Entitlements Amendment Bill 2018 was introduced into the House of Representatives on 22 August 2018.
- The Bill relates to how the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) administers Bereavement Payments. There are no changes to current entitlements to Bereavement Payment – they will remain exactly the same.
- DVA already has legal authority to provide Bereavement Payment and to recover any overpayment of income support pensions paid to veterans after their death. The Bill will confirm DVA's authority to streamline these two transactions into one administrative transaction.
- This is a compassionate, sympathetic and unobtrusive response which avoids disturbing the family with additional interactions with DVA while they are grieving.
- When a veteran receiving a DVA income support payment dies, the surviving partner is entitled to a Bereavement Payment equivalent to 14 weeks of the veteran's income support payment.
- The Bereavement Payment is designed to assist the surviving partner with the costs following the death of their partner and provide a period to adjust their finances following the end of the deceased partner's payments. It is paid automatically once the family notifies DVA.
- Often the veteran will continue to receive payments after their death, as these payments continue until DVA has been notified. This results in an overpayment.
- DVA, consistent with the Department of Social Services, adjusts these overpayments from the surviving partner's Bereavement Payment in one transaction where the surviving partner has access to / or the benefit of the overpayment. This practice commenced in the 1980s under the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986 (VEA).
- However, DVA has discovered that this legislative provision was inadvertently removed in the Veterans' Entitlements Amendment (Budget Measures 1995-1996) (No.2) Bill 1995 and this Bill will reinsert it.

How would this work for a veteran and their family in practice?

- A veteran and their spouse both receive service pension into their own separate bank accounts.
- The service pension is paid fortnightly in arrears.
- The veteran dies on 7 June 2017.
- The veteran's pension for the fortnight ending 19 June 2017 is paid into his bank account on 22 June 2017. The amount paid \$622.80, is for the period from 6 June 2017 to 19 June 2017.
- DVA is advised of the veteran's death on the 30 June 2017.
- The veteran was not entitled to \$578.31 (13 days) of the final payment.
- A Bereavement Payment is payable to the spouse—totalling \$2,935.80 minus the amount (\$578.31) paid into the veteran's bank account which he was not entitled to receive.
- DVA makes a payment of \$2,357.49 into the spouse's bank account.

(Reproduced from an email distributed by George Skell, State Secretary, VVAA Victoria.)

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Battles of Fire Support Bases CORAL & BALMORAL **1st Australian Task Force, SOUTH VIETNAM** **12th May - 6th June 1968.**

On 13 May 2018, Minister for Defence Personnel, the Hon Darren Chester MP, announced that the extraordinary gallantry displayed by members of the 1st Australian Task Force (Forward) and associated units deployed to Area of Operations SURFERS during the Battles of Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral were being recognised by the Unit Citation for Gallantry. Since that time, more than 1200 Citation insignia have been despatched to servicemen who served at the Battles of Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral within the identified Units. There has been some confusion reported as to the eligibility for the Citation insignia, and while we have updated our website to clarify these matters, we would also like to advise the RSL State/Territory Branches directly so that you can communicate the information to your members as appropriate.

The Battles of Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral were fought between 12 May and 6 June 1968. To be eligible to wear the Citation insignia, with Federation Star, personnel must have served with an identified unit during this period.

Army and Air Force dress policy allows current serving personnel who are subsequently posted to the unit to wear the insignia without the Federation Star, but only while actually posted to the unit. Veterans of cited units, who were not serving with the unit at the time of the cited action, are not entitled to wear the insignia. For example, a veteran who served with 1RAR from 1972 to 1973 is not entitled to wear the Unit Citation for Gallantry insignia, as they were not serving with the unit at the time of the cited action (the Battles of Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral).

How/where to wear the Citation insignia.

Members of uniformed services wear the insignia in accordance with the dress rules of their Service. In civilian dress, serving and ex-serving personnel generally continue to wear the insignia in the same way they are worn on uniform.

This information is also available on our website <http://www.defence.gov.au/Medals/Hon-Decs/Gall-Dist/Unit-Citation-Gallantry.asp>.

The Government Gazette, including the Citation statement, can be viewed online at www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2018G00359.

The Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal report, containing the complete list of Cited units, can be viewed at <https://defence-honours-tribunal.gov.au>.

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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.

DATES TO REMEMBER

Meetings:

Monday October 8th, 2018.

Monday November 12th, 2018.

Monday December 10th, 2018.

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

Pay Day Lunches:

Friday October 12st, 2018.

Friday October 26th, 2018.

Friday November 9th, 2018.

** All held at the North Geelong Football Clubrooms, Swinburne Street, North Geelong, commencing at 11.30am (unless otherwise stated).

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

Special Events:

- **St Pauls Church Service, Melbourne, at 2.00pm on Wednesday' October 3rd, 2018. (See the website for full details). Service commemorates the Battle of FSB's Coral/Balmoral.**
- Remembrance Day November 11th, 2018.
- Christmas Dinner Dance at Belmont Bowls Club, Reynolds Road, Belmont, Saturday November 24th, 2018. Two (2) course meal, band and drinks at bar prices - \$40/person (members), \$45/person (non-members). Replies to the Vietnam Veterans Centre, or to Kevin Benson (0409431393).

For further information on any of the abovementioned events, please contact our Vietnam Veterans Centre, Belmont, on 03 5243 3700. The above list of events is subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances, so don't forget to check out the Sub-branch Website to see what is happening, and to catch up on what has been making news.

Something to Smile About

The Electrician

A Sparky ('Electrician', the Royalty of all Trades) dies in a car accident on his 40th birthday and finds himself at the Pearly Gates. A brass band is playing, the angels are singing a beautiful hymn, there is a huge crowd cheering and shouting his name, and absolutely everyone wants to shake his hand.

Just when he thinks things can't possibly get any better, Saint Peter himself runs over, apologizes for not greeting him personally at the Pearly Gates, shakes his hand, and says, "Congratulations son, we've been waiting a long time for you. Totally confused and a little embarrassed, the Sparky ('Electrician', the Royalty of all Trades) sheepishly looks at Saint Peter and says "Saint Peter, I tried to lead a God-fearing life, I loved my family, I tried to obey the 10 Commandments, but congratulations for what? I honestly don't remember doing anything really special when I was alive. Is it because I'm a Sparky, the Royalty of all Trades?"

"Congratulations for what?" says Saint Peter, totally amazed at the man's modesty.

"We're celebrating the fact that you lived to be 160 years old! God himself wants to see you!"

The Sparky ('Electrician', the Royalty of all Trades) is awestruck and can only look at Saint Peter with his mouth wide open. When he regains his power of speech, he looks up at Saint Peter and says, "Saint Peter, I lived my life in the eternal hope that when I died I would be judged by God and be found to be worthy, but I only lived to be forty."

"That's simply impossible son," says Saint Peter, "We've added up all your time sheets."

The Aussie and the Kiwi.

A Kiwi and an Aussie go to a pastry shop. The Kiwi whisks three biscuits into his pocket with such speed the baker doesn't notice.

The Kiwi says to the Aussie: "You'll never beat that".

The Aussie says to the Kiwi: "Watch and learn".

He says to the baker "Give me a biscuit mate, and I'll show you a magic trick".

The baker gives him the biscuit which the Aussie promptly eats.

Then he says to the baker: "Give me another biscuit for my magic trick."

The baker is getting suspicious, but he gives it to him. The Aussie eats this one too. Then he says again, "Ok, give me one more biscuit".

now but gives him one more anyway.

The Australian again just eats the biscuit.

Now the baker is fuming mad, and yells: "Where's your famous magic trick you mongrel?"

The Australian looks him straight in the eye and says, "Look in the Kiwi's pocket".

Disclaimer: This Newsletter is a publication of the Geelong and District Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia, and material contained in this newsletter is general comment only and neither purports nor is intended to be advise on any matter. No person should act based on any matter contained in this newsletter without considering, and, if necessary, taking appropriate professional advice upon his or her own circumstances. The V.V.A.A., 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.

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