



## First Vietnam Victoria Cross for RAR

On Remembrancer Day Governor-General Ms Sam Mostyn announced that King Charles had approved the awarding of the Victoria Cross for Australia to the late Private Richard Norden.

“A few days ago, I had the privilege of speaking to Private Norden’s widow, Mrs Robyn Freeman, to advise her that His Majesty has approved the awarding of the Victoria Cross for Australia to the late Private Richard Norden,” the Governor-General said.

The citation for Private Norden (**pictured**) reads: “For most conspicuous acts of gallantry in action in the presence of the enemy in the 'AO Surfers' Area of Operations in the Bien Hoa province, Vietnam, on 14 May 1968 during the Battle of Fire Support Base Coral.”

Private Norden, then 19, is the first member of the 1st Australian Task Force and of the Royal Australian Regiment – he was with 1 Battalion – to receive the honour.

Australia’s four other Victoria Cross recipients in the Vietnam War were members of the Army Training Team.

Private Norden died aged 24 while on active service with the Australian Capital Territory Police in 1972.

“The Victoria Cross for Australia is Australia’s highest military honour. The awarding of it speaks to Private Norden’s courage and selflessness in the heat of battle, his ongoing legacy and the bravery of generations of our service personnel,” the Governor-General said.

“This is a historic day for Australia and the Australian Defence Force and a significant day for Private Norden’s loved ones.



“When I spoke with Mrs Freeman, I conveyed the appreciation of all Australians for Private Norden’s service, our admiration for his courage and our hope that this recognition – our nation’s highest – brings a further sense of pride and affirmation that he will never be forgotten.”

She said Mrs Freeman had issued the following: “We are honoured that His Majesty has approved the Victoria Cross for Australia for Richard, recognising his gallantry actions whilst serving in Vietnam. We would like to keep this special occasion private ...” - **continued page 3.**

**FEES DUE, AGM TUESDAY, 18 FEBRUARY, NOMINATIONS REQUIRED**



**OUR MISSION:** To assist ALL veterans and their dependents in all matters relating to their health, welfare and well-being.

Our website: [www.vietnamvetssc.org.au](http://www.vietnamvetssc.org.au)

Email: [secretaryvvaasc@gmail.com](mailto:secretaryvvaasc@gmail.com) Editor: [ricocheteditor@gmail.com](mailto:ricocheteditor@gmail.com)

General information Page 2 INCLUDING LATEST OFFICE NEWS

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**VIETNAM VETERANS  
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SUNSHINE COAST  
SUB-BRANCH Inc.**

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Junior V/President	Gordon Hall
Secretary	John Cunnington
Treasurer	Deb Day

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John Cunnington	VV Day
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Air Force Cadets Chris Wessels

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## UPDATE: NEWS ON DROP-IN-CENTRE

Located at the rear of the Library Complex Administration Building (upstairs) , Cnr Sixth Avenue and Beach Parade, Cotton Tree.

Phone 54794552 E-mail: [secretaryvvaasc@gmail.com](mailto:secretaryvvaasc@gmail.com)

**OPENING HOURS:** *Currently the office at the Drop-In Centre is open Monday to Friday, except for Public Holidays, from 0900 to 1200 (9am– noon).*

**NOTE:** *Closed from 20 December, re-opening 7 January, then TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY, THURSDAY ONLY.*

**MEETINGS:** *Third Tuesday of the month: Comm Meeting, General Meeting — times, check office for details.*

**ACCESS:** *Due to privacy and security issues, entry is no longer available via the back door, but only through the front door. However, if you need to use the lift in the main library building, you have to advise the office on phone 54794552 to arrange office entry.*

**POSH MEETINGS:** *Partners Offering Support and Hope meet Friday 1- 4pm in the meeting room beside the Drop in Centre. Coffee/tea/chat.*

### Department of Veterans' Affairs

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This service provides counselling and support to all veterans of overseas conflicts. The families of Vietnam Veterans are also able to receive counselling through us. Group programmes include the Lifestyle Management Program (5 days live-in with partner) and the Heart Safe Program (12 month gym). Other therapeutic/educational groups are being planned for the Sunshine Coast.

**DISCLAIMER:** The committee of Vietnam Veteran Association of Australia Sunshine Coast Sub-Branch Inc. and its individual members take no responsibility for errors, omissions or inaccuracies in this newsletter, nor accept liability for any loss or damage suffered directly or indirectly from the use of information contained in this newsletter, and do not warrant that opinions published in this newsletter are necessarily the opinions held by the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia, this Sub-branch or the Sub-branch Committee, including individual members.

**OUR MISSION:** To assist all veterans and their dependents in all matters relating to their health, welfare and well-being.

- from page 1

“I also committed to Mrs Freeman that we will now work with her, her family, Defence and other stakeholders to arrange a special investiture ceremony that befits the award and its significance to Australia.”

Details of the action: “For most conspicuous acts of gallantry in action in the presence of the enemy in the 'AO Surfers' Area of Operations in the Bien Hoa province, Vietnam, on 14 May 1968 during the Battle of Fire Support Base Coral.

“During Operation Toan Thang, 5 Platoon, B Company were ambushed and came under heavy fire from an estimated squad of seven to ten North Vietnamese Army regular soldiers. Private Norden, a member of the leading section, ran forward under heavy enemy fire to the Section Commander and forward scout who were wounded during the initial contact.

“Private Norden killed one North Vietnamese Army soldier whilst moving forward and, having expended his ammunition, recovered that enemy's automatic weapon which he used against further North Vietnamese Army soldiers. He then half-carried, half-dragged the severely wounded Section Commander back to the section.

“Private Norden, seriously wounded, again advanced to

## V.C. FOR YOUNG DIGGER

the forward scout. He pressed forward under enemy fire and reached the scout, killing the North Vietnamese Army soldier who had been using the scout as a shield.

“Having determined that the scout was dead, Private Norden returned to the section to collect grenades and moved forward for a third time. He cleared the area to enable the body of the scout to be recovered.

“Private Norden showed a complete disregard for his own personal safety, and his courage and selfless acts resulted in the enemy position being secured and likely saved the lives of other members of the platoon.”

A brother, Robert also served in Vietnam in 1970-71.

As reported in *Ricochet* in June 2024, the Federal Government had not acted nearly two years after receiving a recommendation from the Defence Honours Tribunal proposing that the Minister for Defence should “recommend to the Governor-General that Private Richard Norden should be awarded the Victoria Cross for Australia”.

The tribunal case was presented on behalf of the late Digger from Gundagai by Lieutenant Colonel George Hulse OAM (Retd) who had been there at the time.



## Remembering

**HUNDREDS** of veterans and other community members of all ages were out in force around the Sunshine Coast and surrounds on Anzac Day from Caloundra to Noosa and in the Hinterland. A section of the large crowd at Cotton Tree Memorial is pictured at right where guest speaker was Commander John Lyon (RAN Ret'd). Veterans and supporters young and old were pictured (above) overlooking Mooloolaba Beach after a service and before a lunch where guest speaker was Colonel Gordon Hurford, a retired Vietnam veteran. More, pages 8, 15, 16.



## From the President

Hi Everyone,

Hope you are all safe and healthy. This is my last report before Christmas so I'll make it short and sweet.

I would like to wish all members and their respective families a very merry Christmas (note I said Christmas and not 'holiday') with a happy and prosperous New Year.

From a committee point of view, we've had some cheerful and jovial meetings over the past 12 months; no discord, arguments or friction of any kind within the group which makes my job just so much easier.

So, a big 'thank you' from me to your committee members for their efforts and time over the past year.

We have just had our 2024 Ladies Day Luncheon at the Maroochy RSL and it was a beauty. Over 40 of our ladies attended and all tell me that they had a great time, loved the food and spending time with friends.

The entertainer, 'Roy' (pictured) once more did a great job and as usual, at the



end of the day we had numerous requests to have him booked for next year's event. For those of you who aren't aware, 'Roy' is the same entertainer that we have each year at our Vietnam Veterans Day Lunch.

As of January next year, we intend limiting the Drop-In Centres opening days of Monday to Friday to that of Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings.

The committee has come to this agreement due to the lack of visitors attending the offices throughout the past 12 months. I'm sure you will all understand the need for this change.

Well, that's about it from me for the year. As stated earlier, I sincerely hope you and yours have a really great Christmas period, stay safe and look after your health.

**Best Regards,  
Mick Howe,  
President.**



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## From the Secretary

The Ladies Luncheon on 25 November was, once again, a massive success. The food was superb, Roy, the entertainer, was at his charismatic best, but the conviviality amongst the forty attendees made the day.

A special thank-you must go to Jill and the staff at the Maroochy RSL for the professional organization and service on the day.

As sentries, (men were barred from entering the function room except for staff and poor old Roy), Mick and I received an education as the ladies passed by our position on their way to and from the rest rooms. Apparently a young male waiter received a pinch to the rear end from a very sophisticated attendee, (identity withheld for reputation protection). Another was heard to comment, "I wish I had thought of that". Yep, they had a great time.

On another note, a decision was made at the November General meeting to reduce the operating hours of the Drop-In Centre in 2025.

This resulted from the declining numbers of visitors over recent years. Age and a declining demand for welfare and advocacy have had an impact. From

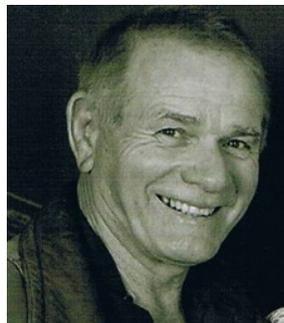
January 2025 the Drop-In Centre will be open Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday only. Operating hours will remain the same. (0900 hours to 1200 hours). The Centre will be closed from and including Friday 20 December 2024 and will reopen on Tuesday 7 January 2025.

There will be no Meetings in December, and the next Committee and General meetings will be on Tuesday 21 January 2025. Until then, I would like to wish all members and their families a safe and healthy Christmas and New Year.

Take care, and in the words of the late Gary King, "always take the high ground".

Regards

John Cunnington.



## OBITUARIES

A former member of the sub-branch David Montague (2781389) passed away on 3 November at the age of 79.

He was a sapper with 17th Construction Squadron in the Vietnam War in 1966-67 and passed away on 3 November. He was born in Sydney.

David was a merchandise officer and volunteer for the sub-branch some years ago. He had three sons. His funeral service was at Gregson and Weight, Nambour, on 19 November.

### Carol Thornton RIP

A member of our Partners Offering Support and Hope (POSH) group passed away recently. She was Carol Thornton, partner of veteran David Stevenson who passed away some years ago.

"Carol was full of life; she belonged to many groups: the POSH ladies, ten-pin bowling and aqua-aerobics, to mention a few," said fellow POSH member Margie Andrews.

"Carol passed away the second week of November of a brain bleed and was given a private funeral by her family as well as a memorial in her beloved garden. She would have loved it. The POSH ladies will miss her greatly."



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**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 11AM TUESDAY 18 FEBRUARY 2025**

I, (FULL NAME IN CAPITALS) .....

**Being a financial member of the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia, Sunshine Coast Sub-branch Inc. (VVAASC), hereby nominate:**

(name in capitals) .....

**For the position of (please tick only one box, use separate form for each position):**

- PRESIDENT**
- SENIOR VICE-PRESIDENT**
- JUNIOR VICE-PRESIDENT**
- SECRETARY**
- TREASURER**
- MEMBERSHIP OFFICER**
- COMMITTEE MEMBERS (up to five positions)**

**OTHER OFFICE BEARERS:**

- ASSISTANT SECRETARY**
- ASSISTANT TREASURER**
- OFFICE MANAGER**
- MERCHANDISE OFFICER**
- RICOCHET EDITOR**
- SUB COMMITTEE MEMBER**

(NOTE: Nominations for the above positions will be accepted from the floor at the AGM if a nomination has not been lodged by the return date for nominations)

**NOMINATOR: (PRINT NAME) .....**

(signed) ..... (date) ...../...../.....

**SECONDED: (PRINT NAME) .....**

(signed) ..... (date) ...../...../.....

**NOMINEE: I, (print name) .....**

**Being a financial member of the VVAASC hereby accept this nomination**

(signed) .....(date) ...../...../.....

**THIS FORM IS TO BE RETURNED TO THE SECRETARY BY NOON ON TUESDAY, 4 FEBRUARY 2025**

(NOTE: Please use a separate form for each nomination for each position. Either photocopy this form or pick up additional forms at the Drop-In Centre).

## Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia Sunshine Coast Sub-Branch

### Minutes of General Meeting, 19 November 2024

**Opening:** Meeting opened 1110 hours. **Ode to the Fallen recited by Mick Howe**

**Attendance/Apologies:** As per attendance book.

**Previous minutes:** The October General Minutes had been distributed in the October edition of Ricochet for perusal. Moved Mick Howe that the October Minutes be accepted. Seconded Bob Johnson. Carried.

**Future of Trailer:** Enquiries ongoing. Mick Howe and John Cunnington to enquire with both army and air force cadet units to ascertain if there is an interest in the trailer.

**Drop-In Centre operating hours:** From January 2025, the Drop-In Centre will only be open three days per week from Tuesday to Thursday. Hours will remain 0900 to 1200.

**Social activities:** John Huxham to investigate Mooloolaba/Maroochydore river cruises regarding a social activity early in 2025.

**New Merchandising Officer:** Mick Gay will take on the role of Merchandising Officer in 2025.

**Christmas Closure:** The Drop-In Centre will be closed from 20 December 2024. (Last day is Thursday 19 December). The Centre will reopen on Tuesday 7 January.

**Next Meeting:** There will be no meetings in December. The next General Meeting will be on Tuesday 21 January 2025 at 1100 hours at the Drop-In Centre. Welcome back drinks and nibbles to follow at the Bowls Club.

#### **Correspondence/Secretary's Report:**

**Incoming:** Invite from 14BN AAC to attend March out Parade on 24 November. Mick Howe will attend. Invite from 128 ACU to attend the passing Out Parade on 1 December. John Cunnington to attend. Invite from 207 Air Force Cadet Unit to attend Ceremonial parade and Dinner on 30 November. John Cunnington to attend.

Library request for next year's meeting dates. Form completed asking for large meeting room for 3rd Tuesday in each month.

Personal Liability Insurance Certificate received from State, but does not include in the "Interest Noted" the requirements of the S/C Sub-Branch for V V Day. This has been followed up.

Request from Inverell Legacy re a penny hat key ring order

**Outgoings:** Various heads-ups re DIC closure, notice of meetings.

Moved John Cunnington that Inwards and Outwards Correspondence be endorsed. Seconded Jim Muir. Carried.

**Treasurer's Report:** Mick Howe read Deb Day's Financial Report. Balance Sheet, Profit and Loss Statement will be attached to the Notice Board in the Drop-In Centre. Moved Mick Howe that the Treasurer's report be accepted. Seconded John Huxham. Carried.

**Membership:** The current Life Subscribers will be contacted to ensure the accuracy of capitation fees. Moved Pieter Reuss. Seconded Kerry White. Carried.

**Ricochet:** There will be no Ricochet in January (as usual). The December Ricochet will include the

Committee nomination forms for 2025. Kerry White investigated the email regarding "fallible" membership forms and recommended no further action. Moved Kerry White. Seconded Bob Johnson. Carried.

**Office Manager:** The Drop-In Centre will be closed from 20 December 2024 and will reopen on Tuesday 7 January 2025. Opening days reduced to Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Hours will be from 0900 to 1200. Moved John Huxham. Seconded Brian Earp.

**Merchandise:** No Report

**DHJ:** A supply of pennies from Bundaberg arrived, and the DHJ crew did a session on 1 November. There are enough pennies for about two months. Scotty is having a sausage sizzle for the crew before Christmas. Moved Graeme Scott. Seconded Brian Earp. Carried.

**Business Arising:** Mick Howe moved that \$50 be given to the DHJ volunteers to cover the cost of the Christmas sausage sizzle. Seconded John Cunnington. Carried

#### **General Business:**

Jim Muir to contact the State Branch regarding the issue of a State Life Membership Card.

**Constitution:** The amendments to the Constitution approved at the last Committee and General meetings were discussed. The amendments made are to the requirements of audit, audited and auditor as stated in Clauses 14 and 15 of the existing constitution. By Special Resolution Mick Howe moved that the amendments to the constitution as circulated be approved. Seconded Mick Gay. Carried unanimously.

**Closure:** There being no further business, the meeting closed at 1150 hours. **Next meeting will be held on Tuesday 21 January at 1100 hrs.**



**REMEMBRANCE DAY with King Charles in London and former PMs (right) and (clockwise from above) at Yandina, Caloundra and Nambour. - credit to Reuters and Facebook.**



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Recently I was speaking with a friend, who kept saying to every conversation, "Listen to what your grandmother told you!"

This repetition intrigued me as I thought about it later for, indeed, my grandmother who lived with us her whole life did say some wonderfully true sayings that have filtered through my life. "Granny," as she was always known, was our housekeeper, our cook and bottle washer, and cared for the family of four while my mother was in and out of hospital having babies.

Granny took over the ultimate care of four little children under five years of age. So, it was rather extraordinary that my friend should include her in almost every topic we discussed.

So, it was not so extraordinary that he should include her in every slice of our conversation. My paternal grandmother had died five years before I was born but Granny's advice guided me through tricky situations in my young life.

It was granny who taught me not to depend on Christmas to bring me toys, but rather that the real meaning of Christmas is more than receiving gifts and eating too much ham, turkey, and Christmas pudding.

My granny knew that Christmas is about the birth of a little baby who grew into a man, who experienced all of the difficulties and falls, aches, and pains that we have. He learned a trade. that of a carpenter.

When He was 30 years of age, he began his true reason for being born. That was to instruct people about the Kingdom of God. He was known as a teacher, an itinerant man who had no home (no mortgage) and who pointed people through his teaching, to the living God.

## ***Fireside with the Padre***

Column 112



But the pharisees who thought his teaching was taking people away from God, sought to capture him and put him to death for His blasphemous statements, that he was the Son of God. They were ultimately successful in having Him put to death, for their reasons, but it was God's purpose that he was crucified for our sins.

Everyone loves a story about a helpless little baby, but fewer people like to think about a death, a death on a cross. This Christmas, I would ask you to ponder the two occasions, the birth and the death of our Lord, Jesus Christ. This is the true meaning of Christmas, as taught to me by my wonderful grandmother. No wonder my friend kept saying, "Listen to your grandmother."

My wife, Annette, wants to thank the committee for the excellent Christmas party they put on for the wives of members. Great to think that our committee recognizes the value our women folk have in keeping us old fellows strong and healthy, not to mention, keeping us on the right path.

Annette and I wish all members the complements of the season, including a Happy New Year. For me, 2025 must be better than 2024.

**Arthur Fry**

**Honorary Chaplain**

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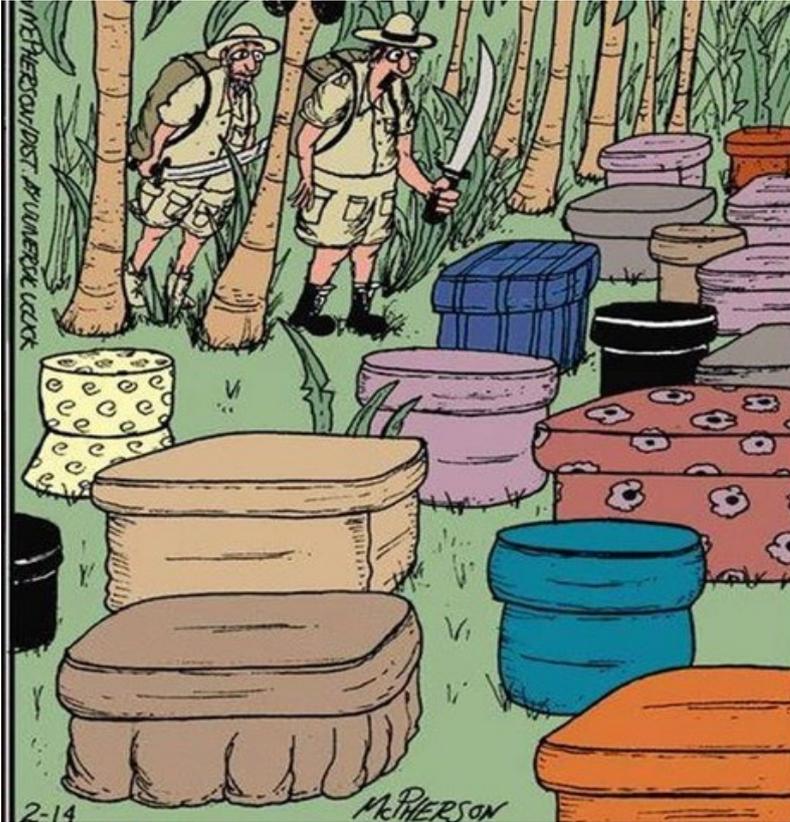
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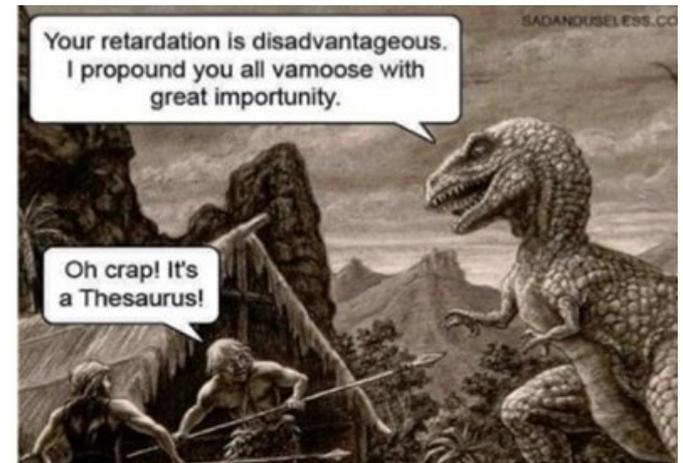
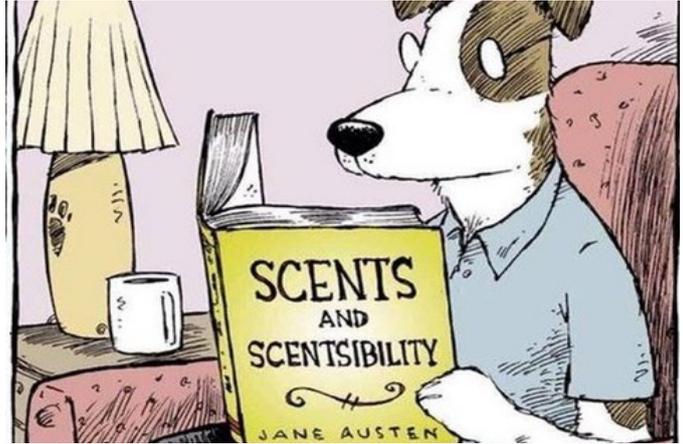
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*‘Great scott, it’s the Ottoman Empire.  
- cartoons sent in by Win Fowles., apologies to artists.*



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# SPECIAL ART FOR REMEMBRANCE DAY



SILO ART has become a major attraction at locations around Australia. This one at Devenish in Victoria was particular poignant for Remembrance Day — artwork done by Cam Scale and photographed by Annette Green.



## Passing the baton

OUR PATRON and Long Tan veteran Laurie Drinkwater at a recent Riflemen's Lunch with the current leader of his former section, 7/12 Plt, D Coy, 6RAR, Cpl Adam Kruse (above right) and the youngest Digger in the battalion, Jim Moore, 17. (RIGHT): Laurie after the battle.



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***AS USUAL a mix of ranks  
and ages attended the  
Riflemen's Lunch in No-  
vember including many  
modern-day soldiers from  
6RAR in Brisbane such as  
RSM Michael Keefe (right  
photo, left rear).***



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## TIMELINE DECEMBER/ JANUARY

**3 December 1854:** Government troops attacked the Eureka Stockade at Ballarat after miners had sworn allegiance to the Southern Cross flag at Bakery Hill. They were disgruntled with the way the colonial government was administering the goldfields. At least 22 miners and five soldiers were killed.

**3 December 1914:** First AIF disembarked in Egypt, though many had expected to go to Britain. After Turkey's entry into the war the first Australian troops were sent to Egypt to protect the vital Suez Canal.

**3 December 1915:** Siege of Kut begins in Mesopotamia and nine members of the Australian Flying Corps serving with 30 Squadron, Royal Flying Corps, became trapped with the forces of Major General Charles Townsend. The Kut garrison surrendered in April 1916.

**5 December 1972:** Gough Whitlam became Australia's 21st Prime Minister when the Australian Labor Party (ALP) formed its first government in 23 years. The Whitlam government, however, was short-lived, being controversially dismissed by Governor-General Sir John Kerr on 11 November 1975.

**17 December 1967:** HMAS Perth comes under fire off Dong Hoi, Vietnam, causing a fire and injuring seven sailors, two seriously.

**20 December 1915:** Last Australian troops evacuated from Gallipoli. The evacuation, largely planned by Brigadier General C.B.B. White, was a triumph of careful planning and bold execution.

**23 December 1901:** The Immigration Restriction Act came into law. It had been among the first pieces of legislation introduced to the new federal parliament and was designed to limit non-British migration to Australia, representing establishment of the White Australia policy.

**25 December 1974:** Cyclone Tracy hit Darwin in the small hours of Christmas Day killing 66 people and devastating 80 per cent of the city. In the days and weeks following the disaster, most of the traumatised population left the city.

**26 December 1859:** European wild rabbits were introduced into Australia so they could be hunted for sport. Within 50 years they had spread across almost the entire continent, with devastating implications for Australia's indigenous flora and fauna. The proliferation of rabbits was the fastest of an introduced mammal anywhere in the world.

**29 December 1928:** Don Bradman, Australia's, and some say the world's, greatest cricketer, scored his first international test century. It was against England at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) in the third test of the 1928–29 Ashes series. — **continued next page.**



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# TIMELINE DECEMBER/ JANUARY

• continued from previous page.

**1 January 1901:** Australia became a nation when the British Parliament passed legislation enabling the six Australian colonies to collectively govern in their own right as the Commonwealth of Australia.

**9 January 1868:** The convict transport *Hougoumont* arrived at the port of Fremantle with 269 convicts, marking the end of 80 years of continuous penal transportation to the Australian continent.

**11 January 1973:** Cessation of hostilities in Vietnam by Australian forces after a proclamation by Governor-General Sir Paul Hasluck, ending 11 years of Australian involvement in Vietnam. (PICTURED)

**23 January 1996:** The work of CSIRO scientists lies at the heart of wireless networks (Wi-fi) now in use around the globe. CSIRO's groundbreaking work in radioastronomy, involving detailed knowledge of the structure and behaviour of radio waves, led to a successful solution to the problem of how to move large quantities of data around indoor environments.

**25 January 1942:** Full mobilisation ordered in Australia as the threat of a Japanese invasion and the proximity of

Japanese forces to Australia demanded an increased commitment from the Government and public.

**31 January 1880:** First issue of *The Bulletin* published and the last in 2008, so it remains one of Australia's longest-running magazines. In its early heyday, the weekly publication became known as the 'bushman's bible', printing specifically Australian and often controversial material.



**Sources include:**

<https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/defining-moments-timeline>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military\\_history\\_of\\_Australia\\_during\\_the\\_Vietnam\\_War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_history_of_Australia_during_the_Vietnam_War)

<https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/atwar>

<https://www.historyplace.com/specials/calendar>

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# Tet Offensive recalled on Remembrance Day

Ladies and gentlemen, it is a great pleasure to be with you on Remembrance Day. Today we commemorate 106 years since the end of “the war to end all wars”. Today, we have the opportunity to reflect on a pivotal moment in the history of the Vietnam War — the 1968 Tet Offensive and the role the Australian soldiers played in this defining chapter.

It has been documented as some of the most ferocious and sustained fighting in the Vietnam War. The intensity of the fighting lasted for more than a month. In looking back at this crucial period, it’s important to remember the courage, sacrifice, and resilience demonstrated by those who served under the most challenging conditions.

I am going to address what the Australians did, in particular 2RAR/NZ (ANZAC) Battalion and not so much about what happened all over the country and the geo-political effects on a grand scale.

During this presentation, I will refer to VC body counts and our own casualties – I apologise now but these statistics help to put the circumstances into perspective.

Some background: By 1967 the war in Vietnam was deadlocked; neither side had the upper hand. In an attempt to gain the advantage, North Vietnamese commanders began planning a massive offensive that would attack every major city and town in the south. The communists hoped this blow would enable them to win the war, or at least weaken American resolve. They also hoped to provoke a general popular uprising against the South Vietnamese government and the Americans.

The offensive was planned to take advantage of the ceasefire at Tet, the most important celebration in Vietnamese culture celebrating the lunar new year, at the end of January 1968. This truce had been observed for a number of years without serious incidents; until 1968.

The operation was codenamed Operation Coburg and was planned to cover the period of the TET truce – four to five days. This became a psychological factor for my platoon because instead of four to five days we spent nearly 30 days under the most harrowing conditions that we had experienced up to that time.

*Address by Colonel Gordon Hurford AM, MID (Ret'd) at a Mooloolaba Surf Club function on Remembrance Day. Originally from Ipswich he was called up for National Service on 29 June 1965. He was selected for officer training and posted to 2RAR. He transferred to the Regular Army and went to Vietnam with the battalion, being awarded an MID (Mentioned in Despatches). Postings in Australia included a number of regimental, training and administrative positions in Brisbane, Sydney, Canberra and Queenscliff in Victoria. Overseas assignments included Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, Papua New Guinea, USA, Middle East (Sinai Peninsula), and Rwanda. He was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 1993 for his role as Commandant 1RTB Kapooka and for his role in the successful introduction of the Ready Reserve program. He resigned from the Army in 1996 and was appointed as General Manager of Monash Country Club, Sydney. He retired in 2008 and now lives on the Sunshine Coast with wife Julie.*

The operation was unique in a couple of ways:

It was the first time the Task Force operated in such strength out of Phuoc Tuy Province and despite the fact that it involved a major deployment, over a long distant from Nui Dat, it was organised and accomplished in two days.

The area in which we deployed had been relatively quiet pre-Christmas, but post-Christmas there appeared to be a significant build-up of enemy main-force elements in the zone. It seemed that a VC Rocket Regiment was moving elements into the area with the main aim of mounting rocket attacks against the huge US complexes that lay to the south-west of Ben Hoa, these included Ben Hoa US airbases and Long Binh logistic centre.

The aim of Operation COBURG for us was to deny the VC access to the area and to sites from which they could launch rockets at the major complexes. This would require reconnaissance in force, i.e. company-strength patrolling. — **continued over page**

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### - Continued from previous page

Preparation for Battle: We began on 24 January. The task force operation involved 2RAR/NZ (ANZAC) and 7RAR, along with supporting armour, artillery and engineers. Left behind at the Nui Dat base was 3RAR, while W Company (NZ) of 2 RAR held the Horseshoe feature.

We deployed north to Ben Hoa Province and operated alongside US 199 Light Infantry Brigade, preparing to block any thrust against Ben Hoa and Saigon. The Australian area of operations was known as Columbus, and was subdivided into east and west.

In the first couple of days the Australians established a fire support base, 1.5km north of Trang Bom ... our aim was to deny the VC access to suitable sites for launching their 122mm rockets. This FSB was called Anderson. 7RAR established a second FSB (Harrison) 10 km west of Anderson .... We discovered very quickly that this was not going to be a walk in the park. For example, a small number of SAS patrols who would normally provide reconnaissance (information gathering) for the Task Force were unable to be inserted simply because of the overwhelming enemy activity in the area. After being unsuccessful for a couple of days they were eventually withdrawn and returned to Nui Dat.

Almost immediately, the companies now patrolling encountered intense combat, often in close-quarter jungle warfare, where visibility was limited, and there was a high risk of ambush. Their professionalism and tactical skill were evident in their ability to repel attacks, inflict significant losses on the enemy, and defend key positions under sustained pressure. In 12 separate actions, 22 enemy were killed and 13 wounded ....

Fighting erupted across the country in the early hours of the morning of 30 January when the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong began attacking population centres. The main offensive came in the early hours of the 31st when the communists launched heavy ground, rocket and mortar attacks against 36 of the 44 provincial capitals, five of the six autonomous cities, and 72 district capitals and many other small towns throughout South Vietnam. In Saigon Viet Cong "suicide units" attacked prominent buildings, such as the Presidential Palace and the US Embassy.

In the period 31 January up to 8 February the companies were in contact with the enemy every day. In 29 separate engagements 64 enemy were counted killed and at least 10 wounded.

One of these battles involved D Company: It all started in the early hours of 31 January. The VC supported by North Vietnamese troops overran the village of Trang Bom, just 1.5km south-west of FSB Anderson. Around mid-morning that day, 10 PI D Coy mounted in APCs took an urgently needed resupply to the South Vietnamese Army post in the village and in doing so found itself involved in a fire-fight. After several skirmishes they were able to eventually reclaim the village that afternoon and resupplied the post. They then returned to base.

However, the VC attacked again in the wee hours of the following morning. This time all of D Company in APCs mounted an attack on the village from west to east but soon came under heavy automatic fire from a determined enemy. The fighting lasted all day with artillery and helicopter gunships being used to neutralize enemy pockets of resistance. Between the company and the cavalry at least 11 VC were killed without any friendly casualties being incurred.

The attacks on Bien Hoa and Saigon forced a change in tactics for the Australians, and our mission was quickly changed from reconnaissance-in-force to a blocking operation designed to intercept withdrawing VC forces. During the first week of February the VC began streaming through the AO, retreating from Saigon in the wake of heavy losses.

## VIETNAM: the TET offensive

Although the VC managed to avoid becoming decisively engaged, around 90 were killed and five captured, as the Australians maintained their blocking positions.

In the period, 9-13 February fighting was considerably reduced except for the 12th when D Company had a series of running battles against an unknown strength enemy force throughout the day and night.

Conclusion: While the Australians in AO Columbus had successfully interrupted the pre-positioning of VC forces on one of the main approaches to Saigon, in hindsight they had been deployed too late to interfere seriously with the offensive. Over the period 9-12 February the Australians redeployed, moving south back towards the fire support base. 2 RAR and V Coy RNZIR (but less D Coy) returned to Nui Dat on 13 February.

Operation Coburg concluded on 15 February for 2RAR when D Coy returned to Nui Dat. We had engaged and defeated both main force NVA units down to local VC units and a very large quantity of enemy weapons and equipment were captured.

Aftermath/ Casualties: Overall, Coburg was considered a success by the Australians and Americans. Although we had been inserted too late to prevent the attacks during Tet, the Australians had successfully disrupted the VC lines of communication, limiting their freedom of manoeuvre to attack the Long Binh-Bien Hoa complex, while we successfully interdicted the VC withdrawal, causing heavy casualties.

However, the significance of the Tet Offensive went beyond the battlefield. It marked a turning point in the public perception of the Vietnam War, both in the United States and in Australia. Despite the military setback for the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces, the sheer scale of the offensive and its surprising coordination shocked the world. It exposed

the vulnerability of allied forces and questioned the prevailing narrative of an imminent US victory. The graphic images and reports that emerged from the conflict fuelled anti-war sentiment and ignited debates back home about the purpose and direction of the war.

For Australian soldiers, the Tet Offensive was a stark reminder of the harsh realities of warfare in Vietnam. It was a time of immense pressure and sacrifice, with soldiers operating in harsh environments, facing a determined and elusive enemy. Their actions during this period underscored their commitment and bravery, even as the political landscape shifted and public support for the war waned.

As we reflect on the Australian involvement in the Tet Offensive, we remember the individual stories of heroism, the camaraderie shared in the face of adversity, and the profound impact of their service. These soldiers not only fought for their nation but also stood alongside their allies in a conflict far from home, driven by a sense of duty and loyalty to their comrades.

Today, we honour their legacy. Their experiences remind us of the complexities and the human cost of the Vietnam War, a conflict that continues to shape our understanding of military engagement and its profound effects on those who serve.

Let us take this opportunity to remember their courage, acknowledge their sacrifices, and reflect on the lessons learned from the Tet Offensive and the broader Vietnam War. In doing so, we ensure that the contributions of Australian soldiers are not forgotten and that their service continues to be a source of inspiration and a reminder of the cost of conflict.

"Lest We Forget"

**PICTURED: Gordon Hurford (left) in Vietnam. — AWM photo.**



## Roll of Honour — Vietnam, December/ January 1962-75

### December 1965

Fotheringham, Alexander Henry T (36543), 28, 1RAR, Cpl, Inverell Cemetery, NSW.

Simpson, Thomas (36205), 27, 105 FldBtry, Gnr, Terendak Military Cemetery, Melaka, Malaysia.

### December 1966

Lithgow, Colin Thomas (214752), 27, 6RAR, LCpl (TempCpl), Rookwood Crematorium, Sydney.

Sullivan, Paul Charles (3786696), 21, 5RAR, Pte, Garden of Remembrance, Springvale, Melbourne.

### December 1967

Birse, Robert Graham (215349), 23, 4FldRegt, Lt, Lawn Cemetery and Memorial Park, Palmdale, NSW.

Fewquandie, Francis John (1411181), 23, 2RAR, Pte, Walkerston Cemetery, Walkerston, Qld.

Henderson, Malcolm Austin (51286), 36, AATTV, WO2, Karrakatta Cemetery, Karrakatta, Perth.

Hyland, Francis Arthur (6708488), 22, 2RAR, Pte, Wynyard Cemetery, Tas.

Robertson, Arthur James (2411510), 30, AATTV (Att.RAI), Sgt (TempWO2), Frenchs Forest Bushland Cemetery, Sydney.

Seiler, Ronald (212909), 28, AATTV (Att.RAI), Sgt (TempWO2), Rookwood Military Cemetery, Sydney.

### December 1968

Cox, Raymond John (2787020), 22, 1RAR, Pte, Goulburn Cemetery, NSW.

Gaffney, Ronald James (3793157), 21, 9RAR, Pte, Mudgee General Cemetery, NSW.

Garrigan, John (310089), 40, RAA (Att AATTV), WO2, Sale War Cemetery, Vic.

Hannaford, Michael John (3791920), 21, CSqdn, 1ArmRegt), Trp, Garden of Remembrance, Springvale, Melbourne.

Kalma, John Henry (215637), 22, 1RAR, LCpl, Garden of Remembrance, Rookwood, Sydney.

Rands, John Milton (2787069), 22, 1RAR, LCpl, Temora General Cemetery, NSW.

Roost, Christopher William (5715153), 22, 4RAR, Pte, Karrakatta Cemetery, Perth.

### December 1969

Brown, Allen Roy (3794895), 21, 6RAR, Pte, Springvale Crematorium, Melbourne.

Buchan, Robert (55613), 22, 6RAR, Pte, Garden of Remembrance, Perth (Ashes later sent to relatives in in Scotland).

Cassano, "Nick" John (5716427), 22, 5RAR, Pte, Karrakatta Cemetery, Perth.

Donald, Barry Creig (29745), 29, 161 (Ind) RecceFlt, Capt., Ipswich, Qld.

Evans, Thomas Arthur (3794256), 21, 1ATF, Pte, Woronora Crematorium, Sutherland, Sydney.

Fitzpatrick, Bryan Francis (A34167), 37, 2SqdnRAAF, Cpl, Fawkner Crematorium & Memorial Park, Melbourne.

French, Vivian Albert (1202185), 19, 3CavRegt, Trp, Mount Gravatt Cemetery, Brisbane

Gould, Eric George (55890), 22, 8RAR, Pte, Garden of Remembrance, War Cemetery and Annex, Perth.

Greene, John Gerard (2791447), 21, 1FIdSqdn, Spr, Woden Cemetery, Phillip, Canberra.

Jellie, Alan Douglas (39510), 22, 161 (Ind) RecceFlt, 2Lt, Centennial Park Cemetery, Adelaide.

Marks-Chapman, Peter Robert (38801), 25, 6RAR, Lt, Garden of Remembrance, Springvale, Melbourne.

Robertson, Malcolm Robert (3793978), 21, 1ALSG, Pte, Lilydale Cemetery, Melbourne.

Stanford, Gregory Ian (2790070), 22, 6RAR, LCpl, Forest Lawn Memorial Park, Leppington, NSW.

Voyzey, Douglas James (2137680), 22, 3CavRegt, Trp, Evergreen Memorial Park, Tamworth, NSW.

Woolley, Ivan Alfred (A118435), 22, 2SqdnRAAF, AC, Mount Gravatt Cemetery and Crematorium, Brisbane.

### December 1970

Galvin, Wallace James (214101), 32, Hq 26 CoyRAASC, Sgt, Eastern Suburbs Memorial Park, Matraville, Sydney.

Knight, Peter Raymond (A318937), 36, 1OSU, LAC, Brighton General Cemetery, Melbourne.

Lloyd, Allan (3797086), 20, 7RAR, Pte, Traralgon Cemetery, Vic.

Moss, Allan Brian (4410968), 22, Det52, SuppPlt (RAASC), Cpl (TempSgt), Evergreen Memorial Park, Enfield, Adelaide.

Nichols, Raymond Kevin (1797), 39, 106 FldWksp, Springvale Crematorium, Melbourne. December 1971

Luff, Neville Francis (28325), 36, 3CavRegt, Pinegrove Memorial Park,

Minchinbury, Blacktown City, NSW.

### January 1966

Bade, Kenneth Wilfred (17071), 27, 105FIdBtry, Capt, Mount Thompson Crematorium, Brisbane.

Bowtell, Robert Walter (213151), 33, 3FIdTrp, Cpl, Macquarie Park Cemetery and Crematorium, Sydney.

Clark, Christopher (215214), 20, 1RAR, Pte, Woden Cemetery, Phillip, Canberra.

Coxon, Ronald Edward (38012), 27, 1RAR, LCpl, Shepparton Cemetery, Shepparton, Vic.

Home, Neville Wayne (215217), 19, 1RAR, Pte, War Cemetery, Rookwood General Cemetery, Sydney.

Lees, Ronald Victor (26182), 37, RAA (AttAATTV), Sgt (TempWO2), War Cemetery, Rookwood General Cemetery, Sydney.

Penn, Desmond Hugh (5411479), 26, 1RAR, Pte, Karrakatta Cemetery, Perth.

Petersen, Bror Ola (5411305), 25, 1RAR, Pte, Karrakatta Cemetery, Perth.

- Continued next page.

**'At the going down of the sun and in the morning we will remember them ...'**

## Roll of Honour — Vietnam, December/ January 1962-75

Wilson, Mervyn Arthur F. (213780), 29, 1RAR, Pte, War Cemetery, Rookwood General Cemetery, Sydney.

*January 1967*

Tweedie, Geoffrey Lawrence (3787416), 21, 6RAR, Pte, Garden of Remembrance, Springvale, Melbourne.

*January 1968*

Bell, Alec Ernest James (5714453), 21, 7RAR, Pte, Karrakatta Cemetery, Perth.

Binning, Raymond Paul (4410704), 21, 2RAR, Pte, Centennial Park Cemetery, Adelaide.

Davison, Walter Johnston (311546), 27, 8FIdAmb (att.2RAR), Pte, Garden of Remembrance, Springvale, Melbourne.

Morrison, Dayle William (1732186), 22, 2RAR, Pte, Pinnaroo Cemetery and Crematorium, Brisbane.

Norley, Graham Leonard (43058), 23, 2RAR, LCpl (Temp.Cpl), Centennial Park Cemetery, Adelaide.

Trzeciński, Paul Zigmund (216115), 21, 7RAR, Pte, Rookwood Military Cemetery, Sydney.

*January 1969*

Cock, John Raymond (42564), 29, 9RAR, Sgt, Centennial Park Cemetery, Adelaide.

Duroux, Jeffrey Max (15230), 28, 9RAR, Sgt, Centennial Park Cemetery, Adelaide.

Graham, Allan Walter (43528), 22, 9RAR, Cpl, Garden of Remembrance, Centennial Park Cemetery, Adelaide.

Graham, Samuel (2787716), 22, 4RAR, Pte, Woden Cemetery, Phillip, Canberra.

Harris, Ronald Arthur (5410968), 26, 2SASSqdn, LCpl (Temp.Cpl), Karrakatta Cemetery, Perth.

Huelin, Antony Jeffrey (O27710), 25, RAN HelFit, A/SubLt, Pinnaroo Cemetery and Crematorium, Brisbane.

Key, Robert MacDonald (39493), 21, 9RAR, Pte, Springvale Crematorium, Melbourne.

Malone, Peter Anthony (215983), 21, 3CavRegt, Trp, Liverpool Cemetery, Sydney.

Meredith, Thomas Frederick (2788798), 22, 9RAR, Pte, Rookwood Necropolis, Sydney.

Musicka, Harold Robert (4717754), 23, 9RAR, Cpl, Centennial Park Cemetery, Adelaide.

Nagle, George (39565), 23, 9RAR, Pte, Garden of Remembrance, Springvale, Melbourne.

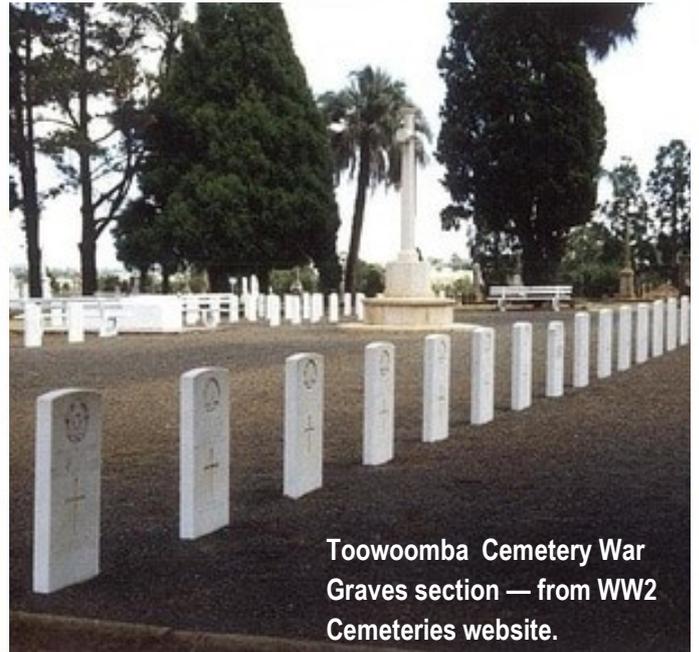
Phillips, Reginald Arthur (4719545), 21, 9RAR, Pte, Murray Bridge Cemetery, SA.

Plane, Bruce James (4719981), 21, 9RAR, Pte, Ardrossan Cemetery, SA.

Ramsay, Joseph Steven (1733037), 22, 4RAR, Pte, Pinnaroo Cemetery and Crematorium, Brisbane.

Smith, Peter Charles (2788912), 24, 9RAR, Pte, Rookwood Crematorium, Sydney.

Sykes, Arnold (55431), 25, 9RAR, Pte, Bunbury General Cemetery, WA.



Toowoomba Cemetery War Graves section — from WW2 Cemeteries website.

*January 1970*

Clifford, Laurence Ian (42132), 39, ASqdn3CavRegt, Centennial Park Cemetery, SA.

Engstrom, Ronald John (18797), 22, 1FIdSqdn, Cpl, Pinnaroo Cemetery and Crematorium, Brisbane.

Hollis, Anthony Edward (2786682), 23, 1FIdSqdn, Spr, Woronora General Cemetery, Sutherland, Sydney.

Stevens, John George (313122), 21, 5RAR, Pte, Woden Cemetery, Phillip, Canberra.

Wagstaff, Victor Neil (312756), 20, 8RAR, Pte, Maryborough Cemetery, Vic.

*January 1971*

Clark, Ross Tasman (3793971), 24, 1FIdSqdn, Fawkner Memorial Park, Melbourne.

Craig, Peter (2782049), 5RAR, 25, 5RAR, Pte, Wagga Wagga Lawn Cemetery & Crematorium, NSW.

Dufty, Milton Raymond (2792150), 22, 7RAR, Pte, West Kempsey Cemetery, West Kempsey, NSW.

Halkyard, Eric (311620), 27, 7RAR, LCpl, Garden of Remembrance, Springvale, Melbourne.

Hartney, Gilbert John (34854), 39, 102FIdWksp, WO2, Garden of Remembrance, Springvale, Melbourne.

Sheriff, Peter James (A119739), 20, 1OpSptUnit (att.9SqnRAAF), Drayton and Toowoomba Cemetery, Toowoomba, Qld.

- **Information and photos from Australian War Memorial, Roll of Honour; Department of Veterans Affairs; Virtual War Memorial, Australia; Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Wall of Faces; Find A Grave.**

**'At the going down of the sun and in the morning we will remember them ...'**