



# RI COCHET



Monthly newsletter of VVAA Sunshine Coast Sub-Branch Inc. SEPTEMBER 2023

## Vale to two leaders of Vietnam battles

Two leaders of legendary battles during the Vietnam War have been remembered and recognised after passing away within weeks of each other and close to our national Vietnam Veterans Day.

They were General Sir Philip Bennett AC, KBE, DSO (pictured closest right), who commanded 1 Battalion, RAR during the Battle of Coral-Balmoral, and retired Colonel Harry Smith SG, MC (ret) (pictured far right), commander of D Company, 6RAR in the battle of Long Tan.

Colonel Smith was a member of our organisation, the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia Sunshine Coast Branch. Our patron, Laurie Drinkwater, was with his company at Long Tan. His funeral service was held on 30 August at Buderim.

A funeral service for General Sir Phillip Bennett was held at Anzac Memorial Chapel of St Paul, Duntroon. He was born in Perth on 27 December 1928 and died on 1 August.

Sir Phillip was in the Army for 41 years, serving in Japan, Korea, Malaya and Vietnam. He was wounded in Korea and later Mentioned in Dispatches.

In Vietnam he commanded 1 RAR during the Battle of Coral-Balmoral and was awarded a Distinguished Service Order. In 1982, he became an Officer of the Order of Australia and later a Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire.

He served as Chief of General Staff (1982-84) and Chief of Defence Force Staff (1984-87). In 1985, he was made a Companion of the Order of Australia in recognition of service to the Australian Defence Force.



After retiring, Sir Phillip served as Governor of Tasmania (1987-95), later becoming inaugural chairman of the Australian War Memorial Foundation.

Harry Smith was born in Hobart on 25 July 1933 and died on 20 August. After 90 days National Service in 1952, he enlisted in the Regular Army on 24 April that year. He was accepted into the second intake at the new Officer Cadet School at Portsea, Victoria, later in that year.

In 1954 he completed a parachute course and went on to 1 and 2 Commando companies, overseas training with UK, US and Canadian airborne forces (After Vietnam he was commanding officer of first Army Parachute School).

He was posted to 2 Battalion, RAR in 1955 and later served during the Malayan Emergency 1955-1957. He went to Vietnam in 1966 as officer commanding D Company, 6 RAR.

— continued page 3

### INSIDE: VIETNAM VETERANS DAY COMMEMORATED NATIONALLY



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)

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**General information Page 2 INCLUDING OFFICE NEWS.**

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

**Office Phone 54794552**

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**OFFICE NEWS .....**

*OFFICE OPEN Monday to Friday 0900 to 1200 (9am — noon).*

*WANTED: DUTY OFFICER for Monday mornings; also one wanted available for relief (contact office).*

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

**MEETINGS: Return to the third Tuesday of the month, 1000hrs Comm Meeting, 1100hrs General meeting. Our next meeting is Tuesday, 19 September.**

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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.

# Remembering two leaders of Vietnam battles

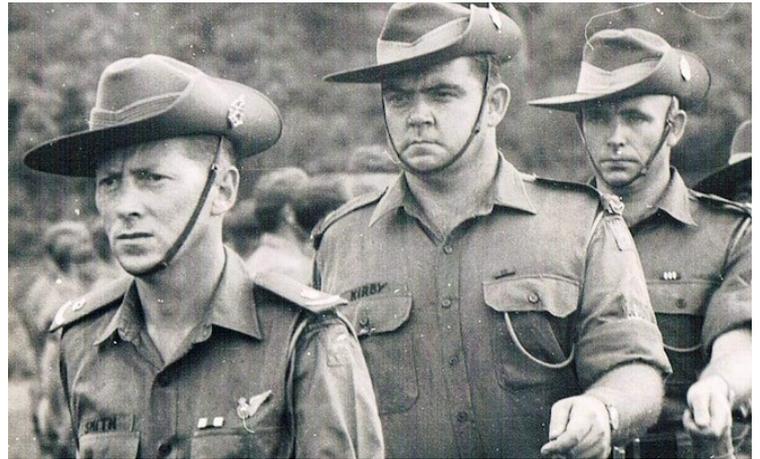
- from Page 1.

The battalion went to Vietnam in June 1966 as part of 1 Australian Task Force with 5 RAR. On 18 August 1966 he was leader of his company at Long Tan. As Australian War Memorial historian Ashley Ekin\* relates:

“Australian soldiers fought in scores of fierce actions during the war in Vietnam. Few were as intense or dramatic as the action in the Long Tan rubber plantation on 18 August 1966. An isolated infantry company of 108 men, cut off and outnumbered by at least ten to one, withstood massed Viet Cong attacks for three hours. They suffered the heaviest Australian casualties in a single engagement in Vietnam, but prevailed against the odds. Their valiant stand became a defining action of the war.”

Medals awarded afterwards included among others: Military Cross (MC), Major Harry Smith; Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM), Warrant Officer 2 Jack Kirby, Corporal J. Carter; Military Medal (MM), Sergeant Bob Buick, Private Ron Eglington. Several others were Mentioned in Despatches. The awards were supplemented by the US Presidential Unit Citation for Gallantry (1968) and the Australian Unit Citation for Gallantry (2009).

Over time (later retired) Colonel Smith and other made representations for a review of the awards made for the battle. It was particularly successful with Colonel Smith MC being awarded the Star of Gallantry, second only to



**MEDAL parade in Vietnam after Long Tan (from left) Major Harry Smith, Warrant Officer Jack Kirby (RIP) and Sergeant Bob Buick. – photo from ABC.**

the Victoria Cross, and other significant awards being made.

He kept fighting for more recognition for his men, particularly a Victoria Cross for Warrant Officer Class 2 Jack Kirby DCM (deceased) but was mostly unsuccessful. WO Kirby, the company sergeant-major was killed by “friendly” artillery fire in February 1967.

\* **Ashley Ekins was Head of the Military History Section at the Australian War Memorial. His story: <https://www.awm.gov.au/wartime/55/long-tan>**

## Farewell for Harry Smith

**SOLDIERS** from 6RAR escort Harry Smith's coffin on a gun carriage after his funeral service (Steve Jerome photo); and (below) fellow veterans from D Company, 6 RAR in Vietnam bid farewell (from left): Rev. Richard 'Shorty' Brown MM, Bill Roche MID, Barry Vassella, Laurie Drinkwater, Arthur Waters, Alan 'Bluey' Parr, Dave Sabben MC and John Heslewood. More page 13.

**BELOW: Harry Smith SG MC**



## From the President

Hi Everyone,  
 Hope you are all safe, happy and healthy. Well, another Vietnam Veterans Day has come and gone again. A lot of diligent work went into the whole preparations for the event and for that we have John Cunnington and his crew to thank.

On the whole, I think the day went extremely well, that is with the exception of the public address system during the ceremony at the Cenotaph. For that we sincerely apologise. Having said that, I must mention the fact that the system was tested prior to the ceremony and all was in good working order. However, when inserting a USB memory stick into the machine to play various Anthems, it has somehow bugged up something inside and well, you know the rest. I can say that without doubt this will not happen again in future ceremonies/functions.

Anyway, after the drama at the Cenotaph it was off to the RSL for lunch and a bit of fun. I canvassed the tables during the function and am happy to state that there was not one complaint or whinge received throughout the entire proceedings, in fact it was the complete opposite. I'm informed, and it was very obvious, that all had a great time.

We have already started to receive bookings from various people/groups for the event next year, so that will tell you something of how the day was received.

I'm sure you have all heard of Harry Smith's passing. The funeral was held here on the Sunshine Coast and was exceptionally well attended by both military and civilian personnel.

It had the lot: gun carriage, guard of honour armed cat-a-falque party, members of D Company, 6 RAR in full uniform, a flyover and a contingent of soldiers who flew in from New Zealand.

After the service, attendees were invited back to the RSL at Maroochydore for refreshments, which were fully funded by both the RSL and your Association. Our sincere condolences go out to Harry's family and his many friends at this sad time.

Well, that's about it for the moment. Remember, if you have any ideas or thoughts on how we can improve our Association, drop us a line or give us a call at the office. We welcome all feedback, good or bad.

**Best Regards,  
 Mick Howe.**



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## From the Secretary

Well, that's another month gone from the calendar and what a month it was! The month of August was deeply saddened by the passing of several veterans from our membership. Lest We Forget.

Poppy Services were provided by Maroochy RSL for these funerals.

The service and funeral for Lt Col Harry Smith SG, MC (ret.) was well attended and most ably organised by 6RAR personnel and officers from Enoggera Military Base.

Also, a wake was organised at Maroochy RSL Events supported by Vietnam Veterans, at Maroochy RSL with contributions from two other regional Sub-Branches.

We also had a very successful 50th Anniversary for Vietnam Veterans Day at Cotton Tree cenotaph, which was very well attended.

The committee of Sunshine Coast Vietnam Veterans Association would again like to thank all who participated

in the day, especially our own Jack Cunnington, whose duties continued at the luncheon with the sales of raffle tickets with his team, including family friends and fellow veterans. Thanks Jack!

I would also like to pass on my thanks to the parade marshal, Rick Brittain, and reviewing officers, Les Dalton and Ian Atkinson in the way they performed their tasks.

The flyover at around 1130hrs, was well accepted by all attending and, except for a PA glitch, the day went exceedingly well.

It was supported again by Maroochy RSL, Sunshine Coast Regional Council, Sunshine Coast First Aid, Piper Keddie, Air Force Cadets and Band along with our amazing volunteers, our South Vietnamese friends and veterans. Thank you.

Moving on with other upcoming events, as this Ricochet goes to print, we have the Ironman event on Sun-

day, 10 September still in organising stages.

Mick Howe and myself would hope to have had this event all tied up by Wednesday, 6 September. Thank you to all who have volunteered.

You will probably also be aware of meeting days moving back to Tuesday as from this month.

Great afternoon at Rifleman's on Friday 1st (how come Akko and Hayden arrived very late in civvies?).

That's about it for me this month: remember our volunteers, because without them we are no more.

Stay safe and well. (Always take the high ground)

Kind regards

**Garry King**  
Secretary



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# V.V. DAY MARKED ACROSS THE COAST



*PICTURED: Caloundra RSL presentation of medallions; Long Tan veteran Laurie Drinkwater lays a wreath at Maroochydore (right) and a moment of remembrance at Maleny.*



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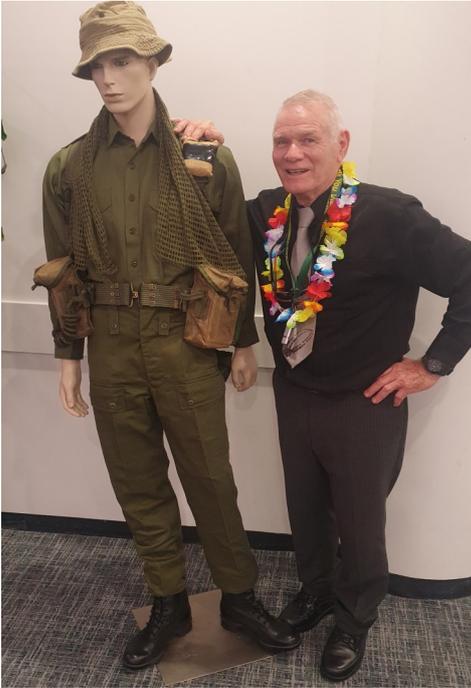
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*ON Vietnam Veterans Day: a beer and a yarn at Tewantin-Noosa (above right); at Maroochy RSL Wayne Reimer, Mike Sheahan, Ron MacNevin and Peter Spindler; “Master of the House” John Cunnington checks out a mannequin Digger made up by Mike Dalton.*

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*TAKING the salute at Maroochydore on Vietnam Veterans Day were Les D’Alton (left) and Ian Atkinson; (below) a group of Australian Vietnamese was again a highlight both at the memorial service and later at the Maroochy RSL luncheon.*



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ON Vietnam Veterans Day in Canberra, Keith Payne VC (left, centre with civvy cap), and (right) unidentified but perhaps next-of-kin of “absent” Vietnam veterans. – DVA photos.

## Locals veterans passed away

Three Sunshine Coast Vietnam veterans passed away recently.

David Arthur Cook (14292) from Bli Bli passed away recently aged 93.

As WO2 Cook he served in Vietnam in 1970-71 with Ordnance Corps as part of 1ATF Task Force HQ and before that in Malaya with 3RAR during a 24-year career.

He was the foundation secretary of Mudjimba RSL in helping found the sub-branch. A son Steve was also secretary and another son, Matt has been on the committee.

“He hadn’t been very active in the last few years, but the club meant a lot to him,” Matt said. “So a pretty good innings, though he started struggling with dementia, and broke his hip a month ago, and didn’t come out of hospital.”

Mike Gillooly, who lived with his wife at Palmwoods, served in Vietnam in 1969-70 as forward observer with DCoy, 8RAR. Major Terence (Mike) Gillooly was born in 1933 in Collingwood, New Zealand and served with Royal New Zealand Army.

Bob Peckman, who lived with wife Lindsey at Bli Bli, served with CCoy, 8RAR in Vietnam in 1969-70.

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# Heroism recognised after 55 years

Overlooked, outgunned and out of ideas, under heavy fire from a network of North Vietnamese bunkers, a dozen or so men of 8 Platoon, C Company, of 7 Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, contemplated what appeared to be a bleak and brief future.

Then, platoon commander Lieutenant Mark Moloney, 23, broke cover to hurl grenades at the closest bunker. He then gathered his men's stock of anti-tank rockets and, rising again, loosed them at the bunker.

When he was out of rockets, he continued his one-man offensive with a grenade launcher. Smoke wafted from the bunker. And Moloney's men rose to resume their slog up the hill, silencing bunker after bunker – always with their com-

mander in the lead.

When it was over Moloney **(pictured)** was covered with blood; with 27 shrapnel wounds, he would only agree to be evacuated after his wounded men had been chopped away.

They said he should have received the Victoria Cross. He was instead recommended for a Military Cross. He got nothing.

Until now. Last month Moloney, now 79 and living in Rivett, ACT, was told he had been awarded the Medal for



Gallantry for his valour in the Battle of the Bunkers at Bien Hoa, South Vietnam, on 7 February 1968.

“His gallant actions whilst under fire were instrumental in destroying the bunker complex, routing the enemy and preventing further Australian casualties,” the medal citation states.

“His actions were in keeping with the finest traditions of the Australian Army and the Australian Defence Force.”

The citation is signed by Governor-General David Hurley's secretary and was published in the Commonwealth Gazette on July 19.

– Continued next page.

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- from previous page.

The medal is the culmination of a decades-long campaign for recognition by Moloney's comrades, especially his classmates from the Royal Military College, Duntroon.

Corporal Edward Czerwinski was five to ten metres from Moloney when he embarked on his solo assault.

So heavy was the enemy fire, a bullet shattered Czerwinski's rifle magazine and another smashed through his hand. Some way to celebrate your 21st birthday.

"(Moloney) did something that no-one else was prepared to do. I just don't know why he did it. Mark just took them on. Fantastic," he said.

Some say that medal should have been the Victoria Cross.

"Young Mark Moloney, in my opinion, should've been awarded a Victoria Cross for what he did," 7 RAR's second-in-command during the action, the late Brigadier Alf Garland, said in 2000.

The Royal Australian Regiment Corporation's Chairman and decorated Vietnam veteran Michael von Berg agreed.

Several theories have been suggested to explain why Moloney did not even receive the lesser award of a Military

## Hero would only pay tribute to platoon

Cross, for which he was recommended by his superior officers.

Firstly, the action at Bien Hoa happened during the North's Tet offensive, so the paperwork might have been overlooked in the general confusion of the time.

Secondly, the awards system was governed by a quota and 7RAR had received its allowance of medals. (On this point von Berg said: "How can you have a quota on courage?")

And thirdly, Moloney downplayed his own role in his official report of the action. An action in which 14 Australians were wounded, but remarkably none were killed.

When the Australian War Memorial asked about his heroics in 1997, Moloney would only pay tribute to his platoon.

— edited version of an article by Andrew Faulkner in *Duty First*, the Royal Australian Regiment magazine.

### VVAASC MINUTES OF GENERAL MEETING, THURSDAY 17 AUGUST 2023

**Meeting opened at 1210hrs. Ode to the Fallen recited by Garry King.**

**Attendance:** 8. **Apologies:** 8.

**Correspondence/Secretary Report:** Garry King advised the meeting that VVAASC member Arthur Reeves will be participating in Scootaville and sponsorship will be appreciated. Email to be sent out with more information. Coastal Cruises has contacted the VVAASC with an offer of cruises at Mooloolaba, more information to follow. Garry has contacted the Building Admin and has been assured that the room is currently booked on the third Tuesday of each month; this will be reviewed at the end of this year; until then the meetings will continue to be held on Thursdays. Fiona Ewington from Mooloolaba Tri requested 26 volunteers, and the necessary registration with Rostify has been completed. An email will be sent out to request more volunteers for this event. Moved Garry King, seconded John Huxham. Carried. No further business arising.

**Treasurer's Report:** Mick Howe gave an overview of the Treasurers Report. Many copies were available and read at the meeting by those members who attended. Moved Mick Howe, seconded Mick Gay. Carried. No further business arising.

**Membership Report:** Garry King read the report supplied by Pieter Reus. As of 14 August 2023 there were 225 financial members. Moved Garry King, seconded Graeme Scott. Carried. No further business arising.

**Ricochet Report:** Mick Howe read the Ricochet report: 27 Ricochets posted to those members who requested hard copy. Emails will now be sent to advise that Ricochet is available on online and a pdf of Ricochet will also be emailed. Moved Mick Howe, seconded John Huxham. Carried. No further business.

**Office Manager:** John Huxham advised nothing to report.

**Sub-Committee:** John Cunnington gave a positive update on the organising of VV Day. Moved John Cunnington, seconded Mal Overend. Carried. No further business arising.

**Digger Hat Jewellery:** Scotty advised three of the DHJ team attended last DHJ day. The bending press is returned to pennies after making 200 ha'pennies- which will become lapel badges. Repairs to be made to tumbling machine which requires a new pulley. Moved Scotty, seconded Mick Gay. Carried. No further business.

#### GENERAL BUSINESS:

**Scotty:** The key obtained from the Council for access to the Dog Memorial does not fit. He contacted the Park's supervisor who advised there are no power points at the Dog Memorial only lighting access within the locked cabinet. He then updated John of the need for a generator at the Dog Memorial Breakfast.

**Mal O:** Advised the meeting that the ABC on Tuesday at 2130hrs has a show called "Our Vietnam War". It can be viewed on Iview at <https://iview.abc.net/show/our-vietnam-war>

**Mick H:** Drinks at the Bowls club after the next Meeting.

There being no further General Business the meeting closed at 1230hrs.

**NEXT GENERAL MEETING, THURSDAY 21, SEPTEMBER 2023.**

**JC's BEFUDDLEMENT PAGE ....****September Trivia**

1. What was the name of the rock band formed by Jimmy Page?
2. Which country did AC/DC originate in?
3. What genre of music did Taylor Swift start in?
4. Who was the lead singer of the iconic '80s band, Culture Club?
5. What is the name of the home of the Greek Gods?
6. Which warrior's weakness was their heel?
7. Who was the messenger of the gods?
8. What's the name of the paradise warriors go to after death?
9. Thor was the son of which God?
10. Romulus and Remus were raised by what animal?
11. The Roman God of War inspired the name of which planet?
12. What was the name of the Egyptian God of the Sun?
13. Anubis, the God of Death, had the head of a...
14. Who wrote "Old Man and The Sea" and is considered one of the greatest writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century?
15. What Danish author is considered by many to be the most prolific fairy tale writer?
16. Who is the writer of "Merchant of Venice"?
17. Adventure of Sherlock Holmes" was written by which writer?
18. What is the name of the fourth book in the Harry Potter series?
19. The Hunger Games series was written by which author?
20. Which country is Aesop's Fables believed to originate in?
21. In Herman Melville's novel "Moby Dick," who was the loyal, reasonable first mate?
22. The book "Da Vinci Code," was written by whom?
23. According to the commercial, "what is the fabric of our lives"?
24. Parkers, trenches, bombers and peas are types of what winter outerwear?
25. What fashion fad did the 1983 film "Flashdance" make popular?
26. The fashion designer, Gianni Versace, came from which country?
27. Who designed the Sydney Opera House?
28. World War I began with the death of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, of which country?
29. The largest political party in South Africa, the ANC, stands for what?
30. What is the legal term for a voluntary written statement made under oath?

**A True Story!!!**

A man boarded an aircraft at Brisbane Airport for New York, and he noticed a very beautiful woman boarding the plane. Amazingly, she took the seat right beside him.

"Hello", he blurted out, "Business trip or vacation?"

She turned, smiled enchantingly and said, "Business. I'm going to the annual nymphomaniac convention in the United States."

Struggling to maintain his composure, he calmly asked, "What's your business role at this convention?"

"Lecturer," she responded, "I use my experience to debunk some of the popular myths about sexuality."

"Really", he smiled, "what myths are those?"

"Well," she explained, "one popular myth is that African-American men are the most well endowed when, in fact, it's the Native American Indian who is most likely to possess that trait. Another popular myth is that French men are the best lovers, when actually it is the men of Greek descent. We have also found that the best potential lovers in all categories are the Irish."

Suddenly the woman became uncomfortable and blushed. "I'm sorry," she said. "I really shouldn't be discussing this with you, I don't even know your name!"

"Tonto," the man said.

"Tonto Papadopoulos, but my friends call me Paddy."

**ANSWERS PAGE 15**



SCENES from the funeral of our member Harry Smith, continued from Page 3. — photos Steve Jerome.



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# When you're laughing, the whole world laughs with you

An old farmer writes to his son who is in prison: "Dear Son, this year I won't be able to plant potatoes because I can't dig the field by myself, I know if you are here, you would have helped me."

The son writes back: "Dad don't even think of digging the field because that's where I buried all the money I stole."

The police read the letter and the next day the whole field was dug up as they searched for the money, but nothing was found.

The following day the son wrote again: "Now plant your potatoes dad, it's the best I can do from here."

A guy goes to the Post Office to apply for a job. The interviewer asks him, "Are you allergic to anything?"

He replies, "Yes, caffeine. I can't drink coffee."

"OK, have you ever been in the military service?"

"Yes," he says, "I was in Iraq for one tour."

The interviewer says, "That will give you five extra points toward employment." Then he asks, "Are you disabled in any way?"

The guy says, "Yes. A bomb exploded near me and I lost both my testicles."

The interviewer grimaces and then says: "Okay. You've got enough points for me to hire you right now. Our normal hours are from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm. You can start tomorrow at 10:00 am, and plan on starting at 10:00 am every day."

The guy is puzzled and asks, "If the work hours are from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm, why don't you want me here until 10:00 am?"

"This is a government job", the interviewer says. "For the first two hours, we just stand around drinking coffee and scratching our balls. No point in you coming in for that."



**"...You have a right to a lawyer. If you cannot afford one, you can always post your case on Facebook and wait for all the know-it-alls to offer advice."**

While serving in Vietnam, my friend and his mates were hunkered down in a mud-filled hole that had been dug into the side of an embankment and covered with timber for protection.

Their one extravagance: a bare light bulb they'd hung from the "ceiling."

One guy was reading a newspaper article from back home about a congressional investigation into why some troops were living in relative luxury.

The guy put down the paper, turned to my friend, and said, "Well, there goes the light bulb."

*Humankind has a perfect record in aviation; we never left one up there. - Source: propilots.org*

*Coffee tastes better if the latrines are dug downstream from an encampment. - Source: milhist.net*

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## September Timeline

**1 September 1900:** Trooper J H Bisdee, 1st Tasmanian Imperial Bushmen, originally from Hutton Park, Tasmania, is awarded the Victoria Cross for bravery at Warm Bad, South Africa.

**1 September 1906:** The young nation of Australia became a colonial administrator when it assumed responsibility for the external territory of Papua – the southern half of what is now Papua New Guinea.

**1 September 1951:** Signing of the security treaty between Australia, New Zealand and the United States of America (ANZUS) was undertaken to ensure peace and safety in the Pacific region.

**3 September 1939:** Britain, France, Australia, and New Zealand declare war on Germany after the German invasion of Poland.

**7 September 1936:** Only two months after the species was granted protected status, the last known thylacine died from exposure at Beaumaris Zoo in Hobart. It is estimated there were around 5000 thylacines (pictured) in Tasmania at the time of European settlement.

**8 September 1900:** A hurricane with winds of 120 mph

struck Galveston, Texas, killing over 8000, making it the worst natural disaster in US history. The hurricane and tidal wave that followed destroyed over 2500 buildings.

**8 September 1951:** Peace treaty (Second World War) signed with Japan.

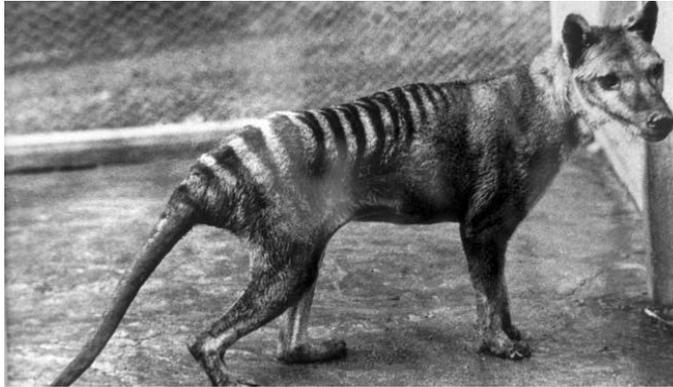
**12 September 1854:** The Melbourne and Hobson's Bay Railway Company opened Australia's first steam railway line in Melbourne. The 4km track went from Flinders Street Station to Sandridge, now known as Port Melbourne.

**12 September 1955:** 2 Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, advance party arrive in Penang, Malaya, to assist in suppression of communist insurrection.

**15 September 2000:** Athlete Cathy Freeman lit the Olympic flame in the spectacular opening ceremony of the Sydney Olympic Games. Ten days later she won the gold medal in the women's 400 metres race, achieving her greatest goal.

**17 September 1944:** Academy award-winning, Australian cameraman Damien Parer was killed while filming American troops on Peleliu in the Pacific.

– continued next page.



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## September Timeline

● from previous page

**20 September 1912:** Official approval given for the establishment of a military Central Flying School and formation of the Australian Flying Corps.

**21 September 1971:** The Battle of Nui Le took place in Phước Tuy Province, a tactically inconclusive encounter between troops from 4 Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment and the NVA 33rd Regiment north of Nui Dat. Five Australians were killed and 30 wounded.



**26 September 1983:** Off the coast of Rhode Island in the United States, the yacht Australia II (pictured) crossed the finish line to win the America's Cup. It was the first America's Cup race in 132 years that a country other than the US had won.

**27 September 1956:** With the agreement of the Australian Government, Britain began testing atomic weapons at three sites on Australian territory: the Montebello Islands off Western Australia, and Emu Field and Maralinga in South Australia.

**28 September 1950:** 3 Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment arrives in Korea.

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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## War dogs remembered



**REMEMBRANCE** at the National War Dog Memorial at Alexandra Headland on Vietnam Veterans Day. Leo van de Kamp, a Vietnam War veteran and inaugural president of the Australian Defence Force Trackers & War Dogs Association spoke at the service.

## Buderim plaque for Daniel Keighran VC

A plaque honouring Corporal Daniel Keighran VC will be unveiled at Buderim War Memorial Hall on 22 September.

He was awarded the VC on 24 August 2010 in Uruzgan Province in Afghanistan. Mr Keighran was born in Nambour, Queensland, in 1983 and spent time in Buderim. He joined the regiment in 2001. After service in East Timor and Iraq, he first went to Afghanistan in 2007.

The official ceremony will be at the hall at 10.30am followed by morning tea, with refreshments later from 12.30 at the Mooloolaba Surf Club.

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## Reflecting on Vietnam — address from service on 18 August

Good morning all, particularly war veterans and younger generations .... I also acknowledge those members of the Australian Vietnamese community who are with us today.

We are here to commemorate a significant period in the history of our nation, the Vietnam War, which officially covered the years 1962 to 1975.

As the Australian War Memorial relates:

“The arrival of the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam (AATTV) in South Vietnam in July and August 1962 was the beginning of our involvement in the Vietnam War.... Our participation in the war was formally declared at an end when the Governor-General issued a proclamation on 11 January 1973. The only combat troops remaining in Vietnam were a platoon guarding the Australian embassy in Saigon, which was withdrawn in June 1973.”

Nationally, today, we are recognising the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of our involvement in that war.

About 60,000 Australian defence personnel served in Vietnam, with 523 dying as a result of the war and almost 2400 wounded – more than 3000 Australians were evacuated with wounds, injuries or illness.

Our initial commitment of 30 military advisers in 1962 grew to include One Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, in 1965 and a task force comprising 5 and 6 battalions, as well as

support units, in 1966.

Australia's last combat troops came home in March 1972, about three years before the war ended. Some Australians returned to Vietnam in 1975 to help with evacuations and humanitarian work during the war's final days.

Out in front during the war were the “grunts” – the infantry – with one battalion through to nine battalions doing tours, some two tours, as well as the SAS and our most decorated unit, the Training Team, who were there from beginning to end.

Of course, infantry was not alone, backed up in the field by artillery, armoured corps, engineers, particularly Tunnel Rats, signals, transport, army aviation, RAAF, padres, Salvos and Everyman who could turn up anywhere with coffee and a biscuit.

Navy was involved with HMAS Sydney, the Vung Tau Ferry, which did 22 voyages over seven years, and other ships as well as helicopters and divers.

Not to forget those saving lives, our doctors and nurses, entertainers and other civilians such as QANTAS crews who made 300 flights into and out of Saigon.

Significant engagements included the Battles of Gang Toi, Long Tan, Ba Ria, Binh Bah, Suoi Chau Pha, Coral-Balmoral, Long Khanh, Nui Le and others involving members of our training team.

History often tends to reflect on the numbers, the cold statistics of war, so today I would like to recall the experiences of several individuals as examples of what some of those 60,000 Australians experienced in Vietnam – so many varied experiences.

There is a difference too – not for them a battleground with an enemy out there, but the enemy unseen: mines and booby traps; one of the worst incidents was on 21 February 1967 when B Company, 5 RAR, crowded into Armoured Personnel Carriers (APCs) crawled up the foothills of the Long Hais, an imposing mountain range and enemy stronghold.

Out of nowhere, a massive explosion echoed through the bush and through the radios in the APCs. I was in the last APC, we were guessing it was a mine as we clambered out of the vehicle with our weapons to form a defensive position. We had not hit the ground when there was a second smaller explosion.

- Continued next page

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**- from previous page**

We could hear the sounds of pain and anguish as well as a few orders being barked – but we could see nothing and could only presume what had happened.

Then we heard and caught a glimpse of a bubble-nose chopper above the trees before it landed. The pilot was Jim Campbell, I found out much later, who was awarded a DFC (Distinguished Flying Cross) for his actions.

As his citation reads: “At great personal risk Captain Campbell flew a medical officer to the scene of the mine explosions, and landed in the minefield knowing full well that he and his helicopter could be destroyed by a mine explosion triggered by the helicopter’s skids or the down blast of the rotors. He chose to do this so that by quick evacuation the lives of the more seriously wounded might be saved.”

Many of you know Jim who now lives on the Sunshine Coast and played a major role in establishment of the local medical and rescue helicopter service which is now part of Life Flight. Jim would normally be here on this day, but I believe he is overseas.

The doctor he dropped in was Doctor Tony White (no relation), who gingerly stepped around the horrific scene prioritising and treating the wounded where he could.

As we found out later nine were killed and 22 wounded, the wounded including the company commander and a platoon commander who both died later.

It appears that the lead APC had detonated a mine of enormous destructive power leaving a crater 2 metres wide by 1 metre deep. The 13-tonne vehicle had been tossed 3 metres away and onto its side.

As medics approached the scene the second explosion came; one of them had stepped on another mine causing more casualties.

It was only in recent years I caught up with that chopper pilot, Jim Campbell, and have written about him. He helped evacuate wounded on that day with support from RAAF dust-off choppers deployed quickly to the scene.

One of those killed that day was Richard Sandow, a 20-year-old born in Broken Hill and farewelled at Albany Creek Crematorium this side of Brisbane.

For many years his brother Robert made a pilgrimage to the Long Hais, on what he described as “not only a poppy run to honour Richard, my brother, and his mates from 5 RAR killed on that day ... but to honour the two men from 3 Cav who died that day as well”.

Initially, he went to the actual location, but that became difficult to find over the years because of jungle growth, so he went to a nearby temple. In 2018, he found the temple was closed, so his friend and guide Vinh was able to find some locals to open it.

Other local people appeared and went into the temple as well, but they allowed space for Robert to place his poppies for each of those killed. He could tell they understood.

They understood very well no doubt the family connection, the brotherly love, though there has been limited or qualified understanding of the war itself.

It is estimated that more than half a million South and North Vietnamese civilians were killed.



**PILOT Jim Campbell (right) in Vietnam with Harry Smith, who was OC of D Company 6 RAR at Long Tan, and who died recently. - AWM photo.**

Tens of thousands of military deaths included Vietnamese as well as those from the United States, Australia, South Korea, Thailand, New Zealand, The Philippines, even China and the Soviet Union.

Two million people fled from Vietnam after the war more than 80,000 refugees settled in Australia.

It is interesting to note involvement of the Soviet Union (read Russia) and China in the context of their attitude and actions globally today. Some Asian leaders believed the ‘Domino theory’ of communist expansion at the time – for example, Singapore’s leader, Lee Kwan Yew, apparently believed the war stalled the ‘dominoes’ and gave countries like his time to stabilise and be less attractive to communist infiltration.

While Vietnam became communist, it does not have cosy ties with either .... for example, in dispute with China on territorial issues and its neutrality on Russia’s Ukraine invasion. It has strong relations with western countries such as Australia, the United States and Japan.

On this day, to modern Vietnam we wish peace and prosperity. Also, let us honour and remember all those who died and were wounded in the war, those who suffered then and since, as well as their loved ones and families.

Lest We Forget.

**Address at Maroochydore  
Vietnam Veterans Day service  
by Kerry White, pictured in  
Vietnam where he served with  
5 RAR (1966-67). He is editor  
of ‘Ricochet’.**



## Roll of Honour – Vietnam, September 1962-75. Lest We Forget.

### September 1965

Scott, Ronald Allan (213006), 37, AATTV (attached RAI), Sgt (Temp. WO2), Rookwood Military Cemetery, Sydney.

Smith, Francis John (37003), 25, 1RAR, Pte (Temp. Cpl), Ouyen Cemetery, Vic.

### September 1966

Blanck, Wayne Allan (38033), 28, AATTV (attached RAI), Sgt (Temp. WO2), Garden of Remembrance, Springvale, Melbourne.

### September 1967

Brett, William John (2785150), 21, Pte, 2RAR, Armidale General Cemetery, NSW.

McDuff, Peter Edward (2782440), 22, LCpl, 2RAR, Darlington Point Cemetery, NSW.

Nelson, Dennis Edwin (4718427), 21, Pte, 2RAR, Centennial Park Cemetery, Adelaide.

Radomi, Stanley Edwin (43573), 22, Pte, 2RAR, Centennial Park Cemetery, Adelaide.

Twomey, John Warren (1200750), 33, Sgt, 2RAR, Pinnaroo Cemetery and Crematorium, Brisbane.

Weston, Leslie James (1731955), 22, Pte, 2RAR, Atherton Cemetery, Qld.

### September 1968

Abraham, Dennis Eric (4718946), 22, Sig. 104 SigSqn, Centennial Park Cemetery, Adelaide.

Burns, Robert (4718097), 22, LCpl, 4RAR, Centennial Park Cemetery, Adelaide.

Le Bherz, Norman William (18395), 22, Spr, 1Fid-Sqdn, Brisbane General Cemetery.

Rhodes, Maxwell Lachlan (2796378), 22, 4RAR, Pte, Garden of Remembrance, Rookwood, Sydney.

Smith, Robert Stanley (1/4209), 2RAR, WO2, died Brisbane (no other details).

Muc, Michael (2787512), 21, 4RAR, Pte, Rookwood Necropolis, Sydney.

Noonan, Michael James (2787793), 21, 4RAR, Pte, Garden of Remembrance, Rookwood, Sydney.

Sukmanowsky, Michael (4719573), 21, 1ARU, Pte, Centennial Park Cemetery, Adelaide.

Williams, Archibald Stanley (5715189), 21, 1RAR, Pte, Karrakatta Cemetery, Perth.

### September 1969

Fisher, David John E (2787344), 23, 3 SqdnSASR, Pte, Garden of Remembrance, Rookwood, Sydney.

Kingston, Ian William (1734754), 20, 6RAR, Pte, Mount Thompson Crematorium, Brisbane.

Rennie, Brian (312641), 21, 9RAR, Pte, Garden of Remembrance, Springvale, Melbourne.

### September 1970

Mowbray, Brenton George (53657), 36, HQ AFV (AA Psych C), Capt. (Temp. Maj.), War Cemetery and Annex, Perth.

### September 1971

Beilken, Brian Charles (5718195), 21, 4RAR, Pte, War Cemetery and Annex, Perth.

Duff, James (3799449), 20, 4RAR, Pte, Mitta Mitta Cemetery, Vic.

Kingston-Powles, Keith Michael (56226), 24, 4RAR, Pte, Woongarra Crematorium, Townsville, Qld.

Niblett, Ralph James (3798081), 21, 4RAR, Pte, Garden of Remembrance, Springvale, Melbourne.

Sprigg, Roderick James (5718122), 21, 4RAR, Pte, Mukinbudin Cemetery, WA.

From Australian War Memorial, Roll of Honour; Department of Veterans Affairs; Virtual War Memorial, Australia; Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Wall of Faces.

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