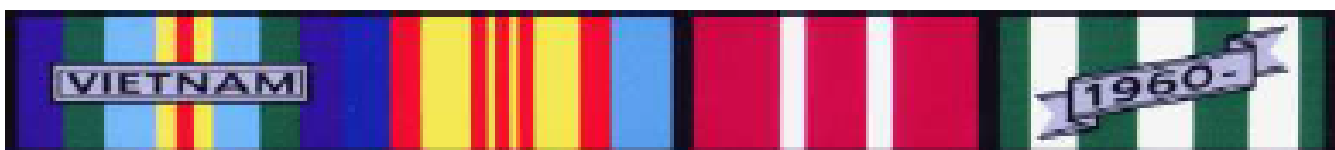




CONTACT!

**Honour the dead, but fight like hell
for the living.**



June 2020

Well, the bushfires combined with COVID 19 knocked the stuffing out of our lives and our planned activities for ANZAC Day, and remembrance of the Coral-Balmoral anniversary. This enforced, isolated quietness is reminiscent of our diminished status in our communities that we experienced in the early 1970s, after many in Australia bitterly rejected our involvement in the Vietnam War.

The Corona virus and the governments' attempts to limit the rate of infections has had immediate impact on Australian social and economic life. The massive layoffs, social distancing, isolation, and changes to families' economic status affects all Vietnam veterans either directly or indirectly and we need to be aware of the psychological impact that this can have on our colleagues. In this time of crisis Open Arms has stated: **Veterans & Families Counselling remains open for business through this period. Clients are being encouraged to access their mental health support through phone and video options. We have also implemented increased hygiene practices and provided guidance for staff and clients on appropriate measures to take if a client attends a centre when they are unwell. Our free phone support lines remain open 24/7 for assistance by calling 1800 011 046.**

Once we are well clear of the impact of this virus, the challenge for each one of us is the make a big effort as we gear-up to remind everyone about Vietnam Veterans' Day, Remembrance Day and our role as keepers of these important Australian cultural memories.

Also, at this time we need to spare a thought for our American comrades who are doing it very tough at present. The Woodruff Foundation data (graph on page 8) shows the real impact of COVID 19 on American veterans, In spite of our current difficulties, we are so lucky to be living in Australia.

VVAA WA acknowledges Ramsay Health for their support over the last few years.

Vietnam Veterans' Association of Australia W.A. Branch Inc.

President's Report- June 2020 CONTACT

Perhaps I should start by asking R.U.OK? and are Your Mates OK? after the past months, with the COVID 19 Health issues and recent storms. Hopefully, with the easing of social distancing and travel restrictions we will all be able to get back to some sought of normality in our lives over the coming weeks/months. While we need some rain, hopefully, we won't get any more severe storms, during the winter months.

Due to the restrictions in place, the VVAA WA committee meetings have been held electronically, by e-mail but should get back to face to face meetings by July. Open Days and other activities at ANZAC Cottage were suspended, again these activities will resume in the coming months.

We all would have experienced a different ANZAC Day in 2020, with no services or social engagement, on the day. At ANZAC Cottage, the flag went up at 4.30am, thanks Ian, with the Last Post, Rouse and National Anthem being played at Sun Set, as the flag was lowered, in lieu of the normal service.

The VVAA National Congress and Council meetings in May, were held as video conferences, worked well, for the first attempt at holding VVAA meetings this way. While we will return to the normal VVAA meeting format, in Canberra, other video meetings could be considered, in the future.

Agenda for the VVAA Council meeting on 13th May, contained fewer items than perhaps a face to face meeting, with all listed business being discussed, all reports tabled and accepted. VVAA Congress, 14th May, as expected, election of National Executive, all Executive members re-elected for a further 12 month term, with the exception of National Secretary, Graham Anderson, standing down, being replaced by Terry Roe, from Tasmania.

One issue raised at Council and endorsed by a majority of representatives, some discontent with VVCS, now open Arms Counselling Service. This service was "established" as result of the VVAA lobbying government for such a service, due to Vietnam Veterans' mental health issues. In recent times, the acknowledgement of "a service established by Vietnam Veterans" has been overlooked and missing from the Open Arms banner.

In more recent times, with the name change, management changes and the expansion of the Open Arms service requirements, due to the change in Government policy. To change the term "Veteran" to recognise any ADF member, with 1 days service, as a "Veteran" has increased the "work load" for Open Arms and the need for a change in the type of service delivery. To meet the needs of a Veteran, with "active" service, to that of an ADF member, who has not seen "active" service.

As described by one member at Council, VVCS/Open Arms, has gone from being a "caring" service, to a "bureaucratically" controlled service.

The VVAA are currently raising these matters with the NAC and Open Arms senior management.

If any member, in more recent times, has experienced any change in service delivery or access to Open Arms counselling, the VVAA and VVAA WA would like to know details.

On the WA front, planning for the 2020 Vietnam Veterans' Day and the KIA Commemoration, were put on hold, until there was indication the Health and Social distancing restrictions would be eased,

allowing for the Memorial service to proceed. Normal planning will now go ahead for the KIA Commemoration, on Saturday 15th August and the Vietnam Veterans Day service to follow, on Sunday 16th August, at 11.00am.

Due to the prevailing conditions in the past months, negotiations regarding the long-term title holding, ANZAC Cottage, have been held in abeyance during this interim period but these negotiations will resume, at the earliest time convenient.

At a recent City of Vincent council meeting, the Draft Property Management Format was approved. What this will mean to the VVAA WA, we will negotiate a new lease agreement, for ANZAC Cottage, reducing the VVAA WA's exposure and responsibilities, in relation to maintenance and other outgoing costs associated with the Cottage.

In the coming weeks, I will arrange to meet with relevant City of Vincent staff members, to discuss and get direction, on works required to carry out improvements to the lawns and gardens at ANZAC Cottage. A longer term and ongoing plan are needed, to ensure the surrounds of the Cottage are at an acceptable standard.

Concerns have been raised, regarding the condition of the Vietnam Memorial Pavilion, Kings Park. VVAA WA member Greg McAllister, who was involved in the erection of the Pavilion, obtained quotes for restoration work. This quote and details of work required have been forwarded to the BGPA, Kings Park for consideration and the VVAA WA are following up on this matter and obtain funds, if required, to carry out repairs. The VVAA WA are currently waiting for a meeting with and response from BGPA, Kings Park.

With theatres and other public venues closed over the past months, I will check to see when screening of the Movie "Never Too Late" will commence in Perth theatres and if the free passes I have will still be valid. I will get this information out by e-mail, when available.

Richard Williams. OAM.

Vale LT Michael Munjak (North American Veterans' Unit)

The late President of the North American Veterans' Unit, LT Michael Munjak, was a key figure in our Vietnam Veterans' Day services, and for the American Memorial Day services held in Kings Park. Apart from his organisational role, we were always impressed by Michael's ability to recite the Gettysburg Address, without notes and with great passion. And at our Vietnam Veterans' Day service he always delivered the Psalm with the same gusto, and without notes.

The Honourable Kim Beazley, Governor of Western Australia, said:

In public life you get the chance to meet many great folk doing things for important objectives, mostly humble and unsung. One has just passed. Michael Munjak who ran the North American Veterans' Unit.

He was obvious at ANZAC Day and US Memorial Day. He was passionate. On Memorial Day just passed he would hold a ceremony and recite the greatest short speech ever – Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. He gave it all the meaning intended by its author.

Lest We Forget



We acknowledge the role of the late LT Michael Munjak (President of the North American Veterans' Unit) in our services over many years. Michael is pictured here with Captain Michael Donnelly (USN ret.) (ABC News)

VVAA WA ANZAC Service at ANZAC Cottage 25.4.2020



A student sent this letter to Richard:

OPEN LETTER TO ALL VETERANS FOR ANZAC DAY 2020



Dear Veteran,

Firstly, I would like to say a massive 'thank you' for your service and sacrifice because they are the reasons that we are able to live in such peace and prosperity today. Our happiness and safety that we take for granted will always be on the back of the many hardships that you had undergone.

Normally, Anzac Day is all about your valour as we gather throughout Australia to show our gratitude and respect. This year, however, due to the special circumstances we are unfortunately not able to do so. Nevertheless, through this letter and many more that you are sure to receive, I would like to reassure you that you will always have a special place in the hearts of the Australian people as well as people all over the world. Nothing can diminish the importance of your dedication nor the spirit of Anzac Day.

We will still be commemorating your efforts that will never be forgotten even if we are at our separate homes. In fact, I believe since we are amidst the battle against the coronavirus this year, it allows us to learn from your bravery even more as we attempt to face this situation just like how you confronted the battlefield.

No matter what, your legacy will always live on, as we saw earlier this year how the firefighters fought the bushfires and now, how the medical staff are working tirelessly to defend our people against the virus.

Always know, that it is your heroism which is continuing to inspire generations of Australians.

Once again, thank you for all that you had done for the Australian people.

Sincerely,
Victoria

The Phoenix Program's Australian Connections

In Vung Tau our convoys would pass a military enclosure where we could occasionally see traditionally dressed, black clad Vietnamese. The sign at the gate indicated that it was a military establishment, but little did we know that this Special Activities Training Centre was a key training ground for the CIA's Phoenix Program.

The Phoenix Program

Most civilians watching the Vietnam on their black and white televisions never understood the real brutality of the Vietnam War as the communists fought for control of the southern towns and villages. At morning briefings, we were often told of the assassinations and beheadings of village officials that took place the night before. No one was safe outside the wire. After the Tet Offensive (February 1968) the nature of communist infiltration and violence was revealed as mass graves of men women and children were uncovered. And the legendary WO1, Ossie Ostara, who was attached to ARVN units in Hue, witnessed the opening of mass graves after that long battle.



In Malaya, the main strategy to control political infiltration was through the use of strategic hamlets, which broke up population groups, and controlled communist influence. In the early 1960s the development of the Counter Terror Teams (CTs) and People Action Teams (PATs), with some Australian input were designed to attack the Viet Cong Infrastructure (VCI), and their tactics used to gain influence among the people. In June 1967 the CIA finessed a counter-terror plan known as the Phoenix Program and it was called *Phung Hoang*, named after a mythical Vietnamese bird which looked like a phoenix. Following the French experience in Algeria (Trinquier, 1964/2006), which relied strongly on interrogation, the Americans claimed Phoenix was primarily designed to gather intelligence and the Provincial Reconnaissance Units (PRU) were established to *snatch and grab* VC agents. While this program received bad press, from an American viewpoint it was claimed not to be an assassination program because "You can't get information out of a dead man".

Tet Offensive

During the Tet Offensive, 1ATF was required to respond to the Viet Cong attack on Ba Ria in February 1, 1968 (Johnston, 2018). It appeared that the focus of the attack were the police and the American compound that included CIA/PRU elements. Ernest Chamberlain (in his note attached to the Johnston statement) explained:

The "National Police Advisor" killed by an RPG while being rescued by 1ATF troops was a CIA officer: W.J. Johnson – who was the advisor to the Province Reconnaissance Unit. Euphemistically, the CIA officers were referred to as officials of the "Office of the Special Assistant to the Ambassador" (OSA) or of the "Combined Studies Division" (CSD) – and were on the distribution of 1ATF intelligence reports. The PRU Headquarters in Baria was referred to as "OSA House".

Conclusions

It was interesting that the Phoenix Program showed the way forward in counter guerrilla/revolutionary warfare. Many of the strategies developed by the PRU in relation to *snatch and grab* operations based on the prerequisite of tactical *relative superiority* (McRaven, 1995) were later used in special ops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

References:

Johnston, L. (2018). *The Tet Offensive in Ba Ria, Vietnam, 1968*. Retrieved from <https://vietnam.unsw.adfa.edu.au/the-tet-offensive/>

McRaven, W. (1995). *Special ops. Case studies in Special Operations Warfare: Theory and practice*. New York

Trinquier, R. (1964/2006). *Modern Warfare*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Coronavirus Recession, Isolation Could Hit Veterans Harder Than Most

As reported by Leo Shane III for *Military Times*, the combination of job losses, social isolation, and mounting anxiety connected to the coronavirus pandemic could hit veterans especially hard in coming weeks and months, according to a new analysis by veterans' advocates released Thursday. "COVID-19 could create a 'perfect storm' of developments that could threaten the mental health of many veterans," said Rajeev Ramchand, research fellow at the Bob Woodruff Foundation and author of the research paper. "If we aren't strategic and working proactively, social isolation coupled with anxiety about potentially getting sick and losing their job could lead to grave outcomes for many veterans."

(Vietnam Veterans of America webweekly@vva.org)

The Woodruff report noted that for American veteran retirees:

Half of the U.S. veteran population is age 65 or older, a group that appears to be at increased risk of hospitalization and death should they become infected with COVID-19. While our focus on the economic impacts has been on job loss, some retirees not at risk for job loss may nonetheless face economic challenges. Most notably, many with investment accounts have seen these values plummet (though some may still be worth more than two years ago given the strong pre-COVID-19 market performance). The uncertain period for a rebound means that even with careful management some of these accounts may be at risk of being more quickly depleted.

Also, the report noted:

The increased demand for mental health services also requires that providers not only be available to provide care, but that they be equipped to provide evidence-based care, either in-person or via telehealth platforms. In addition to evidence-based care for conditions that are common among veterans (i.e., depression, PTSD) there are evidence supported treatments for health anxiety.

https://bobwoodrufffoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/BWF_WhitePaper-COVID19-5.0-Final.pdf

A note of thanks from Joshua Rodwell, who is supported by VVAA WA through AVCAT:

I am writing to say thank you. AVCAT have just told me that my scholarship has been renewed for another year and this could not have come at a better time for me. I am still working, but my hours have been cut to the extreme—at this point, I am only working three hours a week. The payment for this month will help me more than I can begin to describe. I am so grateful. I know that I am in a position of privilege to have this scholarship as support during my academic career and I will make sure that I continue to work hard so that I can achieve great marks and overall success in this final year. It will be a very strange year, I'm sure, but I'm not letting the current events detract from my accomplishments (both academic and personal) over the last few months and, hopefully, the future.

As for a little update on how my studies are going...they are going very well. I am in the final stretch. I am currently taking a few elective units that are covering topics from 'writing and research in professional contexts' to 'writing creative non-fiction' and even an 'advanced editing and publishing' unit. I am hoping—fingers crossed—to do well enough and qualify for the placement unit at the end of this year, which will see my working one day a week for thirteen weeks at a publishing house or in an intern/junior editor position at, say, a magazine or news station. There is nothing confirmed yet, since it all depends on what positions arise at each time. Nonetheless, I am excited to put everything I have been learning to use.

As I said, I hope you are staying safe and well, and, again, thank you so very much for renewing my scholarship for 2020. This final year will be very different, but I am still looking forward to my graduation and to beginning a new stage in life.

Warmest regards, Josh.

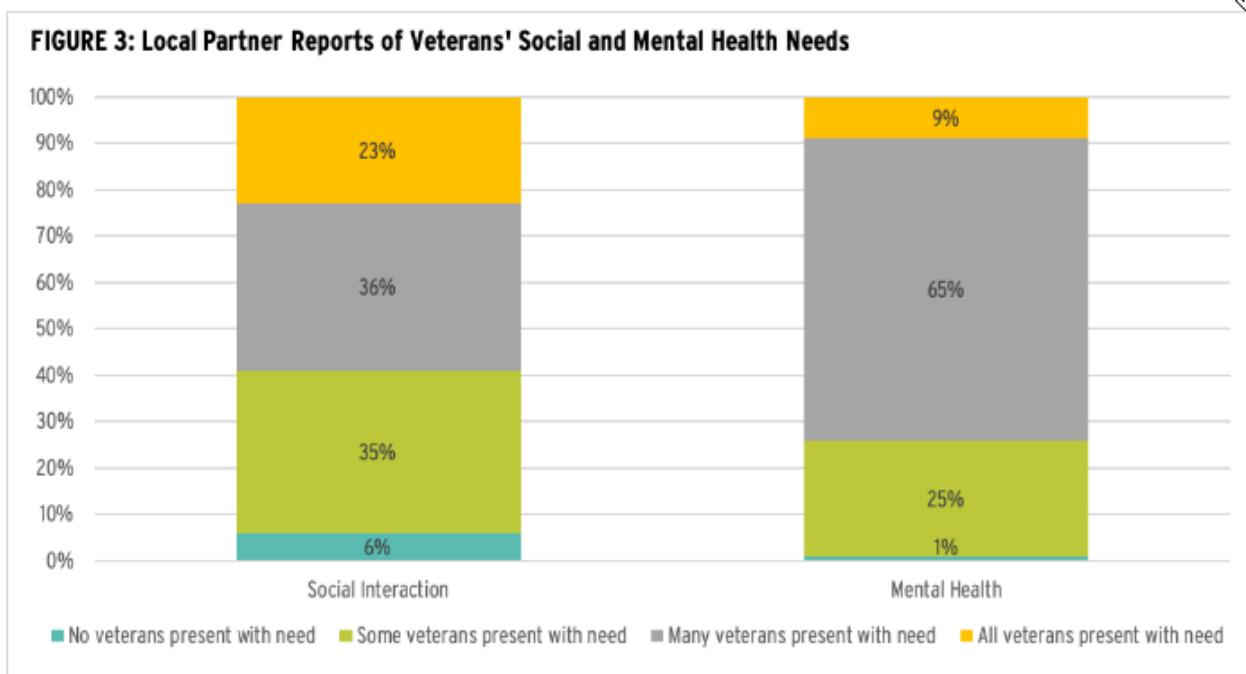
Vietnam Veterans' Day 2020

KIA Commemoration, on Saturday 15th August.

Vietnam Veterans' Day service

**Sunday 16th August, at 11.00am at Kings Park
(Vietnam Veterans' Memorial)**

Data from the Woodruff Foundation in America examined the impact of COVID 19 on the veteran population. These graphs show the perilous situation faced by many vets in terms of mental health needs. This is a real worry, if these numbers are replicated in Australia.



OPEN ARMS Veterans & Families Counselling | **1800 011 046**
OpenArms.gov.au 