

# WESTERN OUTPOST NEWS

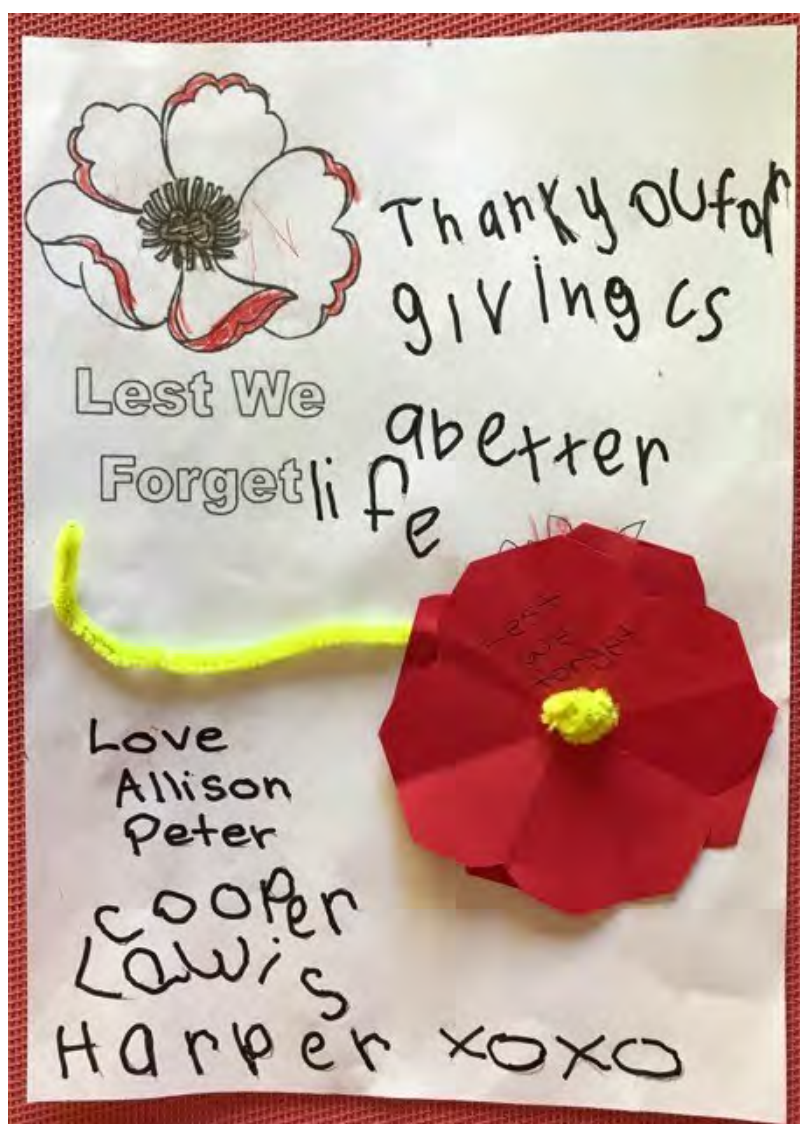


**SUMMER 2018 ISSUE**

St Mary's Outpost the  
'Train of Knowledge'

## St Marys Veterans Centre

St Marys Outpost - VVAA  
and St Marys RSL Sub-Branch



## In This Issue

	<b>Page</b>
VVAA St Marys Outpost President's Report .....	1
St Marys RSL Sub Branch Report .....	4
Letter from the Hon Marise Payne MP .....	7
The Outpost Education Report.....	8
100th Anniversaries - 2018 - Royal Australian Navy .....	10
DVA Facts Made Easy .....	11
Darwin and Return (Part 7) .....	12
St Marys RSL Women's Auxiliary.....	15
Governor King Day Club .....	16
70th Anniversary - Royal Australian Regiment.....	17
Hours of Business for Pension Officers Interviews .....	19
Outpost Computer Classes .....	21
All Aboard at South Creek Station.....	23
The Tet Offensive and the Australian Task Force .....	24
"That Train" .....	26
List of Advertisers.....	28
St Marys Veteran Centre & St Marys RSL Sub-Branch Committee Lists .....	29
Remembrance Day - AWM .....	Back Page



Various places throughout the 'News'

### Front Cover:

A lovely tribute for all veterans from Cooper 6 years old and Lewis 4 years old - this is a great example of how the Spirit of Remembrance has reached our youngest Australians.

### **DEADLINES FOR PUBLICATION**

Autumn 2019 .....	16 February 2019
Winter 2019 .....	14 May 2019
Spring 2019 .....	16 August 2019
Summer 2019 .....	8 November 2019

Articles of a general nature may be submitted at anytime, please send to:  
john.davison@optusnet.com.au

### **Correspondence to:**

**VVAA St Marys Outpost Veterans Centre  
PO Box 3049,  
South St Mary's NSW 2760**

**PHONE: 9833 4700.**

**Fax 9833 4022**

**Web Page: [vvaastmarys.com.au](http://vvaastmarys.com.au)**

**Email: [vietvet@tpg.com.au](mailto:vietvet@tpg.com.au)**

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**St Marys RSL Sub-Branch Email: [stmsub@tpg.com.au](mailto:stmsub@tpg.com.au)**

**Web: Log on to: [vvaastmarys.com.au](http://vvaastmarys.com.au). OR**

**Google: St Marys RSL Sub Branch**

**Phone: 9623 6555**

# **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

## **ST MARYS VIETNAM VETERANS OUTPOST**

**"WHERE IT ALL COMES TOGETHER"**

### **2018 OVERVIEW**

I feel immensely proud to be part of that "Train", especially when answering questions about what we do for veterans, I am mindful to explain that as a Veterans Welfare Centre, we provide a one stop shop assisting and advising in all matters relevant to Veterans pension eligibility and disability claims; our staff are fully conversant with all three Acts of Parliament, VEA, MRCA and DRCA, and they can advise which Act is best for the individual and if their service overlaps each Act.

Often ex-service personnel are asked by friends or relatives about pension entitlements; you should always suggest that each and every case is different and requires expert guidance. Accordingly, it is important that all members of the "Train", encourage enquiries from friends, relatives and acquaintances to just turn up at the Train, Mon, Tues, Wed and Fri between 9am and 12noon for (Except Public Holidays) for an interview with our Pension Officers/Advocates.

There is still only a trickle of serving members and veterans of fairly recent campaigns visiting our Veterans Centre for assistance, however, during the claim process, we have an opportunity to make a good impression on them, we need these clients to go out the door with a desire to spread the good word about our services and activities. To this end, I believe we need to put together a meaningful give away package designed to convert these clients to members.

I have said this before, and, once again I can report without hesitation, that I am always amazed and thankful at how readily members volunteer to fill in for those absent through sickness or simply those taking a well-earned break, all members of the Vietnam Veterans Association St Marys Outpost can be proud of their individual and group commitment to the Trains successful operation.

### **Events:**

VV Day August 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018. Our Commemoration Service held indoors because of doubtful weather was a huge success and re-enforces our decision to hold this annual event indoors irrespective of weather, it will definitely add to the stability of the occasion and make the planning easier on all concerned. Our theme was "1968 Tet Offensive" highlighting Operation Coburg, Coral – Balmoral and Hat Dich. This year's guest speaker Captain Robert J. O'Neill AO MID, a former member of 5 RAR first tour 1966-1967 gave an excellent address outlining the first stage of the Tet Offensive and pointing out Operation Coburg was an extremely ferocious battle. At the conclusion of his address he was given a rousing acclamation, and, following on he had many of our members wanting his ear right up to his departure. Captain O'Neill's book, "**Vietnam Task**" is available from the 5 RAR Association web site. (Note: A transcript of Robert's Address begins on page 24.)

I must say this year's place mat depicting Australia at war in Vietnam was a spot on choice, my sincere congratulations to Artist Brian Wood for his Art and for his in depth synopsis. The formalities of the evening including the change in the order of service went off quite well; this

year's theme was the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the many actions that took place during 1968, noting that 1968 was the Bloodiest, and, without doubt, the DEADLIEST year in the whole of the Vietnam War. Australia lost 102 service members KIA during the actions of 1968.

Once again we were well represented at the ARVN annual dinner and wreath laying. This year the St Marys Spring Festival was, unfortunately a fizzer, and was cancelled due to safety issues with road and footpath works.

The Train conducted an information and memorabilia stall on the 11<sup>th</sup> of the 11<sup>th</sup>, 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Armistice Day Service at the Penrith Paceway.

George and I attended a formal Dining-In night as guests of 21 Army Cadet Unit at the Penrith RSL, it was an absolute pleasure to see over 100 clean cut impeccably presented and very well-mannered young Army Cadets, we were totally impressed by the proceedings.

My congratulations to our secretary Sam Vecchio, who, has recently been elected as President of the State Branch VVAA.

### **Programs:**

Our dedicated Pension Team, Welfare Team, Train Washers, Education Team, Computer Classes and Office Staff have all (As is usual), done a tremendous job in their own area of expertise. We do however, need to consider the future and preservation of this unique facility, to ensure that veterans of current conflicts and conflicts that will undoubtedly follow, can identify with as a place where assistance is available. Our considerations need to address a promotion and awareness program.

### **Vale: "Honour The Dead ... but fight like hell for the living"**

It is with regret that I report the passing of the following members since the beginning of 2018.

John Lawrence Porter	05 Apr	2018	SMSB
Paul Kenneth Devine	28 Sep	2018	VVAA & SMSB
Peter Howis	19 Oct	2018	VVAA & SMSB
Geoffery Leader	22 Oct	2018	SMSB
Peter Curtius	30 Oct	2018	VVAA
James Lawrence Greig	11 Nov	2018	SMSB

### **In Conclusion:**

To all members that make our time at "The Train" memorable. BIG JOB, WELL DONE.

I wish you and your families a very Merry Christmas and a Safe, Prosperous New Year!

**My sincere thanks to all.**

Tony Mullavey  
President





PAUL KENNETH DEVINE



2<sup>nd</sup> August 1948 - 28<sup>th</sup> September 2018



Allan Duncan is a retired detective sergeant and qualified negotiator with 23 years experience in the NSW Police Force. He is also the co-founder and present councillor of the Hawkesbury Police and Emergency Services post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) support group. Having been a resident of the Hawkesbury for 45 years, Allan is familiar with the local area and since entering real estate has sold millions of dollars worth of real estate. He recently achieving equal first in a major sales competition in NSW.

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## ST MARYS RSL SUB-BRANCH

### PRESIDENTS REPORT

We sadly had to announce the passing of long-time sub branch member, Paul Kenneth Devine on the 28<sup>th</sup> of September. Paul joined this sub branch on the 11<sup>th</sup> of May 1971, he always had an interest in the sub branch and how things worked, and if he thought, things weren't going the way they should, he never hesitated to let us know. Paul's funeral was held on the 11<sup>th</sup> of October. Also during this reporting period, we have farewelled a further two sub branch members. Within a week of Paul's funeral, we had the passing of Peter Howis on the 19<sup>th</sup> October (Peter joined this sub branch on 14<sup>th</sup> of May 2008) and Jeffery Albert Leader on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October (Jeffery joined this sub branch on the 13<sup>th</sup> of January 2003). Their funerals were held on the 29<sup>th</sup> of October. All three funerals were very well attended by sub branch member's; thank you to all who represented our sub branch.

- 17<sup>th</sup> Sept** Lesley, Frank and I attended the monthly Armistice Meeting.
- 26<sup>th</sup> Sept** Lesley and I along with many other volunteers, gathered to help unbox nearly 40,000 poppies, this was required as a smaller version of Poppy Park will be created at the Paceway on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November. As part of the Centenary Armistice.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct** Frank and I attended our monthly memorabilia meeting.
- 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Oct** I volunteered to sell Armistice memorabilia at Westfields Penrith; on the 9<sup>th</sup> of Oct it was Lesley's turn, and on 12<sup>th</sup> Tony's turn - we did pretty well with a combined effort of around \$930.00.
- 9<sup>th</sup> Oct 15** sub branch members made our way to Randwick Army Base to pack 1,560 care packages for the Australian Forces Overseas Fund. Whilst there I presented a cheque for \$14,000, as a donation for them to continue their good work. I would like to thank everyone who volunteered to attend, and I know that their efforts were very much appreciated.
- 08<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> Oct** During this period, the St Marys RSL sub branch Members of the Armistice committee along with The Train Washers and many others, took on the challenge to sell memorabilia for Armistice Day; the selling took place primarily at the three Bunning's stores that support us. Other locations where: Westfields Penrith, St Marys Band Club, Henry Lawson Club, St Marys RSL Club and Harrys Schnitzel Joint (Tony Fryer's son and his business partner) and I believe the only small business in the Penrith area to be a major sponsor of the 2019 Armistice calendar. I estimate that this small group raised up to \$10k, for all your efforts - the Armistice Day Committee thanks each of you for a job well done.
- 15<sup>th</sup> Oct** Second last Armistice Committee Meeting, with Tony, Lesley, Frank and I attending.
- 17<sup>th</sup> Oct** Tony and I, attended a Constitutional Seminar, held at the new Anzac House. Level 5, 341 George St Sydney. It was a very courteous meeting, however, we didn't come back with anything positive; there was no give or take. Just us to give.
- 18<sup>th</sup> Oct** Frank, Tony and I, moved all the DVA-donated books, posters, pens, rulers etc, from Franks Garage and deposited said item into the old Cafe room at the Penrith Paceway, ready for packing into show bags; this took place on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of October. Along with the three of us, was Lesley, Joy, along with Manisha, Gai and Derek from the Penrith CBD.
- 25<sup>th</sup> Oct** Tony and I, had the honour to be invited to Superintendent Greg Peters' farewell and march out from the NSW Police Force, which was held at the Riverstone Police Station. Greg spoke to Tony and I, saying he was proud to have been involved with, and to provide support to the St Marys RSL sub branch, especially with our Commemorative services.

- 30<sup>th</sup> Oct** The first meeting of the Anzac Day Committee, was held at the Train, it was decided that next year's them will be the 1919 Russian Campaign, and we would ask David Trist to be our guest speaker. If anyone is interested in being involved with the committee, please advise Tony Fryer. Our next meeting will be on Thursday the 31<sup>st</sup> of January 2019, after the monthly BBQ, at the Train.
- 5<sup>th</sup> Nov** Frank and I, had our last Memorabilia Meeting at the CBD, prior to Armistice Day.
- 9<sup>th</sup> Nov** I represented St Marys RSL sub-Branch, at Governor Phillip Manor's annual Remembrance Day Service.
- 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> Nov** The Armistice Day Committee commenced the setting up of our big day, the Armistice Day Service at Penrith Paceway. Although numbers were down on what we were expecting, the day was, to us a success, with no major problems or hiccups. The day started with the granting of the Freedom of the City of Penrith to the 5<sup>th</sup> Engineer Regiment RAE, and the Police challenge, from there the combined Army, Air Force, RSL sub branches and Schools, sporting groups and the general public marched to the Cenotaph on the Paceway track, for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Armistice Commemorative Service. After the service interesting items where a WW2 Matilda Tank, a large selection of Military Vehicles, and Vintage cars, a recreation of Poppy Park, an Educational stand with WW1 memorabilia, along with other ESO's and Community Groups and food vendors. On behalf of the St Marys sub-Branch committee members, I would like to thank each and every one of you who, volunteered, sold Merchandise, marched, spectated or sponsored an event or gave support, thank you.
- 12<sup>th</sup> Nov** Frank Lawton and John Foeken, attended Our Lady of the Rosary Primary School, Tony Fryer and I attended Cambridge Park High School to support their school's Remembrance Day services. Frank and Tony where asked to speak during the service, which they both did with distinction.
- 15<sup>th</sup> Nov** The Colin Shephard School Scholarships presentation nights held on Thursday night, proceedings started at 7pm, I encouraged as many sub branch members as possible to attend; I assured them that this was a good way to see where their sub branch's money is being used to further year 11 and 12 student's education. Presenting the awards was Mrs Judy Shepard (wife of Colin), Mrs Tanya Davies, Minister for Women, Mental Health, Ageing, Member for Mulgoa and sub branch Patron and Penrith Deputy Mayor, Cr. Greg Davis, handed out 15 scholarships to 15 very happy year 10 students from 5 of the 6 schools that take part in our scholarship program. I would like to thank everyone who attended, especially Ross Pearson, Richard Andrews, Tony Briffa, Bob Devaise, Col and Pam Doust, and Paul Tarlington, for volunteering to serve the evening meal and interacting with the students and their families.
- 17<sup>th</sup> Nov** Tony gave the Address at Chifley College Bidwill Campus' Remembrance Day Service then assisted Ed Husic MP to cut the ribbon to officially open the school's new War Memorial designed by teacher Paul Galea with assistance from students.
- 24<sup>th</sup> Nov** Santa's helpers gathered at the St Marys RSL Club's, Youth Hall, in preparation for, and setup for the St Marys RSL sub branches annual Children's Christmas Party. The stage was setup with Christmas decorations and a beautiful Christmas tree with lights flickering behind Santa's chair. The Elf's quietly sat stuffing envelopes with tokens, for the children to redeem their treat's, which allowed them to have soft drinks, ice creams, fairy floss, Icey's, face painting/tattoo's and plaster painting. After working faster than an Elf should, the job was done, they cheerfully talked about their achievements with an ice cream in hand.
- 25<sup>th</sup> Nov** Santa, being ever resourceful, arranged the children's wrapped presents to be delivered by Sam, Tony Briffa, and Lochie, prior to his arrival. With the party in full swing by 10am, the selection of rides and activities was almost too hard to choose which one to go on first,

with Dodgem Cars, Pirate Ship, Flying Chairs, Jumping Castle, Water Slide, with the two best activities being the Rock-Climbing Wall and the Mobile Zoo with Reptiles (very hands on) was very popular with the children. The highlight of the day was the arrival of Santa, and as all the children had been very good this year, Santa was able to give each child an excellent present. Which I believe they all enjoyed very much. Thanks Santa.

I would like to thank Sam and Kitty Veechio and their family, Tony Briffa and his trusty Ute, plus everyone who helped make the day a success. I can say on behalf of all the children, thank you to all involved.

For those who are interested, I have obtained more stock of our new St Marys RSL sub branch polo shirts. Sizes that are available – small, medium, large, extra-large, 2XL, 3XL, 5XL, and yes it has a pocket. See attached photo. If anyone who lives outside the St Marys area, and you wish to purchase a sub branch polo shirt, you can ring me on 0411131849 and I'll make arrangements to receive your payment, for the item plus postage, to your postal address. Cost per shirt is \$25.00 plus postage, if necessary.

By the time you receive this report, Christmas and the New Year will have come and gone. With that I hope each and everyone of you and your families had a Merry Christmas and a safe and prosperous New Year.



Look after each other and yourselves.

Ron Blakely  
President





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# The Hon Marise Payne

Liberal Senator for New South Wales



Mr Ron Blakely  
President  
St Marys RSL Sub- Branch  
PO Box 3093,  
St Marys South, NSW 2760

Dear Mr Blakely,

It is with sincere thanks that I write to congratulate you and members of the St Marys RSL Sub-Branch for the success of the Centenary of Armistice Day held at the Penrith Paceway on 11<sup>th</sup> November, 2018.

The collaboration of bringing the three RSL Sub-Branches, St Marys, Penrith and Blaxland/Glenbrook and the community together in one location in a moving and heartfelt ceremony is a significant and appreciated achievement.

I was honoured to be part of our community, young and old, to remember the great sacrifice made by our 62,000 Australians and their families, and for the opportunity given to me to articulate my appreciation through a speech.

It is your efforts and that of the members of the St Marys RSL Sub-Branch that ensure that the sacrifices made for our freedom are never forgotten.

Yours sincerely,

*Many thanks for your company  
on the day, best regards.*

*Marise Payne*  
Marise Payne  
Senator for New South Wales  
Minister for Foreign Affairs

Level 3, 2-12 Macquarie Street  
Parramatta NSW 2150  
PO Box 1420 Parramatta NSW 2150  
Ph. (02) 9687 8755  
Fax. (02) 9687 8466  
[www.marisepayne.com](http://www.marisepayne.com)

Suite M1:49  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Ph. (02) 6277 7800  
[senator.payne@aph.gov.au](mailto:senator.payne@aph.gov.au)

Paddy spies a letter lying on his doormat. It says on the envelope: "DO NOT BEND". Paddy spends the next 2 hours trying to figure out how to pick the bloody thing up.



# VVAA ST MARYS OUTPOST

## EDUCATION PROGRAM REPORT

Newsletter reports across 14 years have detailed the Outpost Education Program activities involving school presentations and community information sessions focused on the Vietnam War Topic.

The 2018 program followed the usual Outreach visits to school/colleges well distanced from the Sydney Metropolitan area as well as visits to our regular government and non government educational settings in the Sydney basin. The popularity of the Outpost Education Program continues and to that end the program will be available again in 2019 - all being well!

Although school interest in the Vietnam War topic has continued across the years the period 2015 to 2018 has generated a particular focus on World War I studies and commemoration programs within the education system. Today's information technology allows students to study, research and investigate history as never before. The availability of all manner of information, facts and figures, stories and photographs, movies, documentaries, memorabilia, museums, personal biographies and family heirlooms/stories abound, instantly attainable at the press of a computer key. Even excursions to Gallipoli and Western Front battlefields are common adventures for many of today's senior students.

Having five great uncles killed in action across World War 1 on the Western Front has also determined my focus on family history and service across this period. Activities previously only thought of have become reality - a visit to the Imperial War Museum in London, participation in the 100th Anniversary Commemoration Services of the Battles of Fromelles and Pozieres, pilgrimages to many of the Commonwealth War Grave Cemeteries across France and Belgium to personally visit relatives' grave sites to place a poppy in remembrance, laying a wreath at Menin Gate, walking the hallowed grounds of Villers-Bretonneux, as well as joining many, many thousands of fellow Australians at the Australian War Memorial for the 100th Anniversary of the Gallipoli landing and recently the 100th Anniversary of the 11th November Armistice. All of these activities were happy/sad occasions. Happy to be able to participate, sad for the very circumstances.

Accompanying this report are some photos reflecting involvement and participation in the recent Remembrance Day - a picture is worth a thousand words! No doubt you experienced the wealth of images and information produced by the media in newsprint and on television to cover this most defining event in our Australian history. LEST WE FORGET - 62,000 men and women who gave their lives.

To conclude - special thanks to the Outpost Executive and staff for their tireless work in keeping the Outpost 'lighthouse' operational and for their ongoing support of the Education Program initiative. Thank you to all Outpost members who support the Education Program and the very best Christmas Wishes to members and families for the Festive Season and the New Year.

Vin Cosgrove OAM JP  
VVAA Outpost Education Program







Sir John Monash statue  
at AWM Sculpture Garden  
62,000 Poppies for Remembrance



Garden of 'real' poppies at AWM



An Australian life lost for every poppy



Personal family tributes



Vietnam Veteran Keith Payne VC  
attended Remembrance Day  
Breakfast along with  
Ben Roberts-Smith VC,  
Mark Donaldson VC  
and Daniel Keighran VC



Remembrance Day Breakfast  
Anzac Hall, AWM  
Vin & Nancy Cosgrove

## 100th ANNIVERSARIES - 2018 - ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY

One hundred years ago RAN ships and personnel were deployed variously around the globe during what was to be the final year of fighting during World War I. Many of those personnel had not seen Australian shores since 1914 at which time the ships they were serving in had been ordered to the northern hemisphere to join the Royal Navy fleet in the war at sea against Germany. As the conflict was drawing towards its conclusion the RAN continued to contribute ships and personnel to a number of notable actions and events, some of which are highlighted below.

### 22 April 1918

On the night of 22-23 April 1918, the Royal Navy carried out an audacious raid on the German held ports of Zeebrugge and Ostend in occupied Belgium. The purpose of the raids was to render the ports unusable as U-boat and destroyer bases. Among the hundreds of RN and Royal Marine personnel involved in that action was a small group of RAN volunteers, a number of whom were decorated for their bravery.

### 11 November 1918

On this day the armistice was signed ending World War I. Counted among the RAN's losses were HMA Submarines *AE1* and *AE2* and more than 200 personnel who lost their lives due to wartime service.

### 21 November 1918

On that date the German High Seas Fleet surrendered to the Allies in the Firth of Forth, Scotland. Present were HMA Ships *Australia* (I) (Captain T N James, RN), leading the British port line; *Melbourne* (I) (Captain E A Rushton, RN); and *Sydney* (I) (Captain J S Dumaresq, CB, MVO, RN). The German vessels were subsequently escorted to their internment at Scapa Flow.



Although hostilities had ceased there were other demands to be met by the RAN during the post armistice period. On 24 November 1918, the Naval Board despatched the cruiser HMAS *Encounter* to Fiji and Samoa on what became Australia's first overseas humanitarian assistance operation. *Encounter* embarked medical stores and a joint Army and Navy relief expedition to provide valuable aid following a severe outbreak of influenza among the indigenous populations.

#### Reference:

<http://www.navy.gov.au/media-room/publications/semaphore-australian-naval-anniversaries-and-commemorations>





# DVA facts made easy

RECEIVE THE BENEFITS YOU DESERVE

**THAT TRAIN** Have you ever thought, what is the real function of “That Train”, just sitting there on the Corner of Hall Street and Mamre Road, St Marys?

The brainchild of a small but dedicated group of Vietnam Veterans in association with St Marys RSL, saw a need to establish an All Services Welfare and Drop In Centre staffed by qualified non government consultants who could assist and advise all veterans and dependents with the very confusing formal applications that are required by DVA.

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# DARWIN AND RETURN APRIL – MAY 2017

## PART 7

Don said the next stop would be the hot springs at Mataranka so I let them go at their speed while I continued on at mine. At Mataranka I went to the springs, couldn't find them so went back to the park in town and had some lunch, a cup of tea and peanut butter on a biscuit. I was a bit wary; there were a lot of natives hanging around and I wasn't sure I'd be too safe. Don rang and they were at the other hot springs, so I told him I'd see them at Daly Waters our next camp over.



I didn't even think on about refuelling at Mataranka but push on, riding at about 90/95kph. I rode into the town of Larrimah which was the furthest south the railway went during the war, it was a large army camp during WW II. I stopped at a Memorial Cairn for A Forrest who trekked to that area from WA in 1879. I had another cup of tea and some water there, it was a very warm day. I reached the Highway 8 kilometres south of Daly waters I had done 330 kilometres since Katherine and I was on full reserve. The cost of the fuel there was \$1.509 a litre, I had used 20.94 litres, my tank holds 22. At least I had my 10 litres as a backup. I would have liked to go another 40 kilometres and stayed at Dunmarra but I would have had to return there the next morning.

I met up with the others in the camping area at Daly Waters which is behind the hotel. The area was good, module block amenities which were very clean. Once I had set up camp I went for a dip in the pool which you have to get to via the hotel. I was good to get in cool off. I then went and had a shower. I shaved when I went for a shower, I cut myself and I bled like a pig. My INR reading that morning was 3; it is normally 2.5 whilst a person not on blood thinners is 1. I eventually stemmed the bleeding; it was only a small nick. I Had to mop out the module though, and for the next couple of days I cut back on my blood thinning medication. The camping area was starting to fill up. There was some other bike riders camped next to, they came from WA and we talked to them for a while. We all had a hamburger in the hotel for tea that night. Not cheap, but was a good and filling meal. We all went to bed at about 2000.

Daly Waters was another of the airfields used in WW II, and was the first International Airport in Australia, Qantas used to refuel there in 1926. Aircraft were serviced here and was a back up to the other airfields that were built during the war. The hotel was a main supply post to drovers, the first one being built in 1893. It is still a supply of sorts to travellers, many who want a drink or two. Inside there is a collection of many things, banknotes, thongs, caps, cloth patches and women's bras, all either hanging from the ceiling or from the walls. Outside the hotel there is a red street light, permanently red, the most isolated in Australia.

Also worth seeing is the Stuart Tree, even though it is only a stump; John McDouall Stuart carved the letter S into it in 1862 on his 3<sup>rd</sup> attempt cross the country south to north in 1862. The Overland Telegraph reached there in 1882. After we had decamped we rode to the old airport, the hanger is still there but inside is a bit of a wreck. In 2006 I rode out onto the landing strip and took photos, but now it is fenced off with a sign saying it is still in use.



A wide load on the way to Cape Crawford

We then went the 8 kilometres to the Hi Way Inn, where we had a cup of coffee. Don also learnt that there were 2 extra wide loads on the road to Cape Crawford, the way we were going. The other three have UHF radios so can talk to the truckies and know what's going on or coming whatever the case may be. I only have VHF, and could only talk to Don, when he was in range.

It's 270 kilometres to Cape Crawford, a long haul with nothing between, especially in the heat of the day. It is actually Number 1 Highway, which goes from Normanton to Borroloola via Burke Town, but most use the alternative Number 1 via Mt Isa because it is bitumen. The road isn't in good condition even though it is bitumen. There has been a lot of rain up north and this road was showing it. It was wavy and groovy; some bad patches where the road was completely washed away and plenty of potholes. It was single lane bitumen for the most part, but there were wide sections and these were sign posted usually 5 kilometres in advance. In those sections they had rebuilt the road with stones, not real good on big road bike pulling a trailer.



The other 3 were well ahead of me when I saw the flashing light of an escort vehicle. I was on a wide section, so I pulled to the side of the road. The escort vehicle stopped alongside me and the driver said to pull right off the road. I could see why, the loads being carried were wider than the road.

There were two of them, machinery from the mines near Borroloola. I learnt later they were going to Camooweal. They couldn't go from Cape Crawford to Barkly because there were a couple of narrow bridges just out of the Cape.

Because of the condition of the road I kept my speed down to about 80kph. I saw 2 herds of cattle being mustered into corrals along the way, with cattle road trains ready to load them. They could have been going to other pastures or to be shipped overseas.

About half way to the Cape I caught up with others that were stopped and resting. They had been there a while and were getting ready to leave, I would catch them again later so I had a cup of tea and had a stretch and rest too. I eventually arrived at Cape Crawford where Richard waved me in to the Caravan Park behind the Heartbreak Hotel. They had booked me in when they got there, so all I had to do was find somewhere to set up my camp. They had selected a spot over toward the road to Barkly, I set mine up near a power outlet. That made it easy for me to boil the kettle for a cup of tea and also for filling my thermos.

After encamping and having a biscuit for lunch it was time to join Don in the pool. It was a very warm day; I wouldn't like to be there in summer, so a dip in the pool was most welcome. Thank goodness the pool had a roof over it, we would have been burnt very easy.

I went for a walk around the Hotel, which was the main building in town, not the only one. I couldn't find out why it was called the Heart Break Hotel, I did find out why it is Cape Crawford even though it's 150km inland. The hills around the town look like it could have been the coastline millions of years ago, hence Cape.

Out the front of the hotel were the fuel pumps and in an area there were some old single cylinder Lister diesel engines and a couple of old truck chassis. No doubt they would have been used locally in the past.

Part 8 in the next issue ....

## UNTAMED FLOWERS

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### WOMEN'S REVENGE

'Cash, check or charge?' I asked, after folding items the woman wished to purchase. As she fumbled for her wallet, I noticed a remote control for a television set in her purse.

'So, do you always carry your TV remote?' I asked.

'No,' she replied, 'but my husband refused to come shopping with me and I figured this was the easiest way to get even with him.'





## ST MARYS RSL WOMEN'S AUXILIARY

For more information contact:

Honorary Secretary - Kerry Squires

Email: [kerrysquires@gmail.au](mailto:kerrysquires@gmail.au)



The committee and members of the St Marys Women's Auxiliary, would like to thank the Vietnam Veterans St Marys Outpost for their support and assistance throughout the year. We wish you and your families a Happy and prosperous Christmas and New Year.

Kerry Squires  
Honorary Secretary



### **Blacktown and Districts TPI Social and Welfare Club**

Blacktown and Districts TPI Social and Welfare Club meets on the First Thursday of each month (except January) at the Blacktown RSL Club. Meetings start at 1:00 pm

The Club is open to all TPI Veterans (including Veterans under the MRC receiving the Special Rate of Disability Pension), and welcomes their Carers and Friends.

To join the Club a Veteran must be a subscribing member of the TPI Association of NSW Ltd.

Apart from the Monthly Meetings the Club arranges at subsidised cost, a function, generally each month, which could be a Bus Trip, Luncheon, BBQ.

The Club's Welfare Officers also keep in contact through Hospital and Home visits to those who cannot make the Meetings.

A Newsletter is also distributed to all members, either by email or by 'snail mail'

For further Information, please contact the Hon Secretary: John Davison at

mobile: 0411737446 or email: [john.davison@optusnet.com.au](mailto:john.davison@optusnet.com.au)

An old man goes to the Wizard to ask him if he can remove a curse he has been living with for the last 40 years.

The Wizard says, 'Maybe, but you will have to tell me the exact words that were used to put the curse on you.'

The old man says without hesitation, 'I now pronounce you man and wife.'







## ST MARY'S GOVERNOR KING DAY CLUB

Sponsored by St Marys RSL  
Sub-Branch

“ An RSL Service to the Community”



Well another year has come and gone ( where did it go?) and the Day Club has come through with mixed emotions and success, given all the turmoil going on in head office.

Even though we have lost quite a few members and volunteers we still average around thirty a week. Doreen Tregarther passed on she is sadly missed. We have also have lost Noel Minogue, Irene Brawn, and June Marchant to nursing homes. Allan Tipton and Elaine Marshall has been on the sick list. We wish them the best of health and hope to see them next year.

This year we have had quite a few outings for lunch and places of interest, also guest speakers on many topics of interest. We have been entertained by many artists mainly one man bands which go over well with the members and volunteers.

I have finally been in touch with Wally and Pat Charwood, Wally tells me his health isn't too good at the moment what with his Dialysis treatment and all, whereas Pat had taken a bad fall earlier on in the year (No she doesn't drink) she has recovered well. We wish them both good health and happiness in the future.

On a sad note Mick Reilly informs the club that he will be not returning as a volunteer next year . Mick has been a foundation member of the Day Club for fourteen years. He will be sorely missed, especially his antics in giving the oldies their exercise regime. Thanks very much for all your assistance over the years Mick.

Whilst were on thankyou's, it would be remiss in me by not acknowledging Tony Mallavey in his assistance every week by putting out the tables and chairs all by himself most times. So thanks to you Tony.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> December we will be having our Christmas raffle, six hampers and many other prizes, hopefully everyone will win a prize. Many thanks to all those who donated goodies for the raffle.

Our last day will be the 12<sup>th</sup> December 2018 and we will resume on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2019. Should you have anybody that may wish to join our dynamic team as a member or Volunteer please contact the Club. Come along and see what happens who knows you may enjoy it. No-one is obligated.

We are financially in good stead due to the rise in fees (up to \$7), this has allowed us to overcome the loss of running raffles imposed on us by the RSL headquarters.

Many thanks to the train for their assistance in allowing us to use their facilities over the year, it has been very helpful. Also to the RSL Club Limited who provide the venue for us to conduct our meetings and the St Marys RSL Sub-Branch for their kind donations.

In closing (on behalf of the Clubs Members and Volunteers) I would like to wish all those involved a very Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Allan Greenwood (*Don't mention the air conditioner*)  
Volunteer Governor king Day Club

An old lady was standing at the railing of the cruise ship holding her hat on tight, so that it wouldn't blow off in the wind. A gentleman approached her and said:

"Pardon me, I do not intend to be forward, but did you know that your dress is blowing up in this wind?"

"Yes I know," replied the woman. "I need both hands to hold onto this hat."

"But, madam, you must know that your privates are exposed!" said the gentleman in earnest.

The woman looked down, then back up at the man and replied,

"Sir, anything you see down there is 85 years old. I just bought this hat yesterday!"





## **70TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FORMATION OF THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN REGIMENT.**

The 23rd November 2018 marked the 70th Anniversary of the formation of the Royal Australian Regiment.

The 70th Birthday provided a suitable occasion to reflect on the Regiment's rich history and achievements over the past 70 years where the Battalions of the Regiment have provided all the full time Infantry combat capability for the Australian Defence Force.

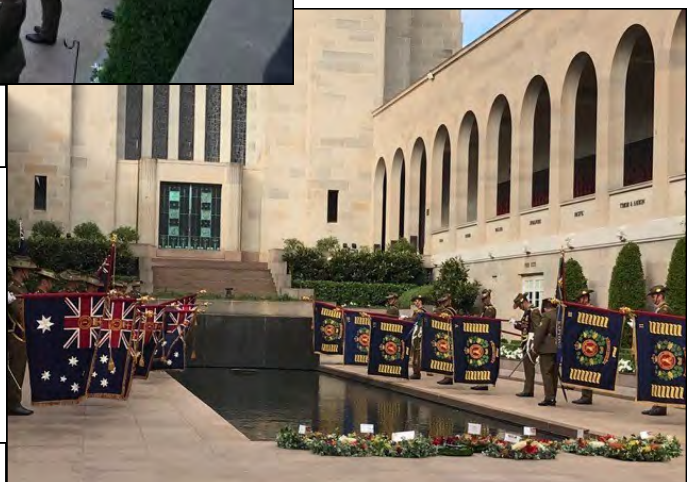
The sight of all the Colours of the Royal Australian Regiment on parade at the Australian War Memorial parade ground, emblazoned with their Battle Honours was an historic and emotional occasion for all present and stirred memories of past service with the Regiment. Equally - those of us present were reminded that soldiers from the Battalions of the Regiment are currently deployed on operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and continue to uphold the high standards set by previous generations of Australian Infantry soldiers who have served under the Royal Australian Regiment's motto of "Duty First".



March On - The Regiment Colours



The Regiment Colours - Pool of Reflection  
- Australian War Memorial



Colours of the Regiment - "Duty First"

## ST MARYS RSL CLUB



Corner Mamre Road and Hall Street St Marys  
Ph 9623 6555 [www.stmarysrsl.com.au](http://www.stmarysrsl.com.au)



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**Members' Courtesy Bus** - *Friday From 6 pm and Saturday From 1.30 pm*

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### DINING at ST MARYS RSL –

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Check Board for Specials

#### FORTUNA Chinese Restaurant

Open for Lunch at Noon and Dinner at 5 pm (Closed Mondays)

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### WHAT'S ON .....

#### **MONDAY**

- Rock and Roll Dancing 7-10 pm

#### **TUESDAY**

- Bingo 7.00 pm (electronic pads available)

#### **WEDNESDAY**

- Monthly Raffle 7pm 2nd Wed of Month

#### **THURSDAY**

- Bingo 11.30 am

- Texas Hold'em Poker 7 pm

- **MEMBER'S Badge Draw** \$3000-\$5000 from 7 pm

#### **FRIDAY**

- Bingo 11.30 am

- CLUB BRASHS—Playing Retro Music 8 pm-12 am

#### **SATURDAY**

- Meat Run RAFFLE 4-6 pm

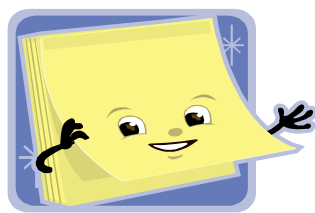
- Rock'n'Roll Bands, Shows and Lounge Music 7.30 pm - Midnight

\*\*\*\* Check "WHAT'S ON BOARD" for Details \*\*\*\*

Is gambling a problem for you? G-Line (NSW) is a confidential anonymous and free counselling service  
FREECALL 188 633 635

Murphy told Quinn that his wife was driving him to drink.  
Quinn thinks he's very lucky because his own wife makes him walk.








## **IMPORTANT MESSAGE REGARDING DAYS OF OPERATION FOR PENSIONS AT THE ST MARYS VETERANS CENTRE**

Pension claims at the 'Train' are now carried out on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday between the hours of 9:00 am to 1:00 pm, however, these timings are flexible depending on availability of Pension Officers.

Anyone wishing to see a particular Officer should phone the office first to ensure they will be in attendance.

Veterans attending the 'Train' for the first time to start a claim should allow for at least two hours for the interview as initial interviews can be time consuming.

**Interviews are carried out on a 'first in first served' basis**



**ST MARYS RSL YOUTH CLUB**  
**ACTIVITIES FOR ALL**

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JUDO    0403 218 871  
KARATE    0417 285 128

↓

**ST MARYS RSL YOUTH CLUB**  
**(NEXT TO RSL CLUB)**





## BELL "IROQUOIS" HUEY UH1H

No other aircraft in the history of aviation evokes the emotional response the Huey does... combat veteran's or not... she is recognised all around the world by young and old, she is the ICON of the Vietnam war, U.S. Army.

"EAGLE ONE" was purchased by Patrick Soars in Houston Texas in 2007, Serial No. 66-16301 and has had a long and proud history in the U.S. army seeing service in the Vietnam conflict (in a training and utility role), Gulf War I and finished her life with the Texas National Guard and Texas Search and Rescue Services.

This fine ship was rescued from perhaps a fate of spare parts and was dismantled and rebuilt to the zero time condition you see today with the help and assistance of **Australian Native Landscapes Pty Ltd** and **Heliaust Pty Ltd**. This ICON of the Vietnam War is perhaps the greatest example of her type in Australia, set in the livery of an American Army VIP transport "slick" she has been restored to the highest of airworthy standards. "EAGLE ONE" is a living reminder of the brave and dedicated crews that rode this magnificent machine into combat. The owners of "EAGLE ONE" are humbled and honoured to be able to fly and display this incredible "Grand Old Lady".

**"EAGLE ONE" proudly sponsored by**



**"LONG LIVE THE HUEY"**

Paddy and Mick were walking along a street in London.

Paddy looked in one of the shop windows and saw a sign that caught his eye.

The sign read "Suits £5.00 each, Shirts £3.00 each, Trousers £4.50 per pair".

Paddy said to his pal "Mick look at these prices! We could buy a whole lot of those and when we get back to Ireland we could make a fortune. Now when we go in, you stay quiet, okay? Let me do all da talking 'cause if they hear our accents, they might think we're thicke's from Ireland and try to screw us. I'll put on me best English accent."

"Roight y'are Paddy, I'll keep me mout shut, so I will. You do all da business" said Mick.

They go in and Paddy said in a posh voice "Hello my good man. I'll take 50 suits at £5.00 each, 100 shirts at £3.00 each and 50 pairs of trousers at £4.50 each. And oy'll back up me truck ready to load 'em on, so I will."

The owner of the shop said quietly "You're from Ireland, aren't you?"

"Well yes" said a surprised Paddy. "What gave it away?"

The owner replied, "This is a Dry-Cleaners."





## COMPUTER TRAINING CLASSES

Computer Classes are conducted at the Vietnam Veterans Train situated at the St Marys RSL Club in Mamre Road St Marys as follows:

Tuesday: 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

Wednesday: 9:00 am - 12:00 pm (LadiesClass)

Thursday: 9:00 am - 11:00 am

Thursday classes teach Digital Photo manipulation using Photoshop Elements 5, only 5 students at a time **Bookings essential.**

The Tuesday and Wednesday classes are informal and we teach mixed classes from the 'beginner' to the more experienced and retired seniors wanting to familiarise with current software and learn to use the Internet to send E-Mails and carry out research and other technology related issues.

**For more info call Keith 9833 4700 or  
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## ST MARYS RSL BOWLERS CLUB

The bowlers club invites all members and visitors to utilize the excellent facilities available with our two greens, spacious bowls lounge and function room. We have a great social bowls programme and free coaching for those interested in starting out. Bowls are available from the club, so there is no cost outlay to start your new pastime.

We also have a strong representation in both male and female pennant teams (representative) which is available to any member to enter. You don't have to be a champion bowler to play pennants. So come along and join in the fun.

### Social Bowls Programme

Tuesday	Any Pairs	9.30am Start
Wednesday	Any Pairs	10.30am Start
Thursday	Ladies Bowls	9.30am Start
Friday	Mens Pairs	1.00pm Start
Saturday	<u>Free Coaching</u>	10.00am – 12 noon
Saturday	Any Pairs	1.00pm Start
Sunday	Turkey Trots (mixed Bowls)	9.30am Start

Contact the Bowls Office via Club Reception on 9623 6555



Two Mexican detectives were investigating the murder of Juan Gonzalez.  
'How was he killed?' asked one detective.  
'With a golf gun,' the other detective replied.  
'A golf gun! What is a golf gun?'  
'I don't know. But it sure made a hole in Juan.'



# All Aboard at South Creek Station



BY NOEL ROWSELL

**SOUTH CREEK** Station is not on the NSW Rail timetable yet there is a train ready in waiting twenty-four hours per day, seven days per week.

Officially opened on November 15, 1993, the station was the brain-child of local businessman Mr Paul McDonald and is situated on land owned by the St Marys RSL and Ex-Services Club.

The site is at the gateway to St Marys off the M4 Motorway and operates as a Tourist Information Office and Training Facility.

It is also the St Marys Outpost, founded by the Vietnam Veterans of Australia and providing support for current and former Australian Defence Force (ADF) members and providing welfare and pension assistance.

The Rails and Sleepers used on site were sourced from the old ADI site at North St Marys and all authentic Railway items were restored and hand-finished. Local vandals struck on the same night the first carriage was



Station View

placed on-site but the installation of a perimeter fence and guard dog quickly curbed the early vandalism.

The first carriage became the Community carriage, to be used by Community groups and businesses for meetings and training (this carriage includes a central Boardroom - or Classroom).

The second carriage on site became the Community Display Carriage but it was in a shocking condition upon delivery, with age damage and vandalism.

Although the Display carriage (Mail Van) was the second carriage on-site, it would become the last to be completed, due to the extensive renovation work needed.

Two suburban double-decker carriages were then delivered to Penrith, where the particular carriage destined for



Locomotive BHP

South Creek received extensive restoration to the exterior, prior to it's transfer to the Museum of Fire rail siding.

From there, it then undertook the final transfer by road transport to South Creek.

The railway lines for the double-decker had however been laid to Country specifications, whereas the carriage was to City specs, so quick work was needed to widen the rails at South Creek to accommodate the new carriage.

Once in place, work quickly began on the interior of the upper deck, including repairs, painting and new floor covering. Only the best of the original seats were used in the reconfiguration of the upper deck, with tables also being placed between each pair of seats so the carriage could be used for functions.

The focus then switched to the lower level, with once again all of the seating being removed so repairs, painting and the new vinyl flooring could be installed.

The seats were not replaced on the lower level and this is now a function room. Both ends of the double-decker carriage were converted, with a kitchenette / service area at one end and wash room facilities at the other.

The penultimate moment for the station was the arrival of heritage locomotive BHP # 16, which is on loan from the NSW State Rail Museum at Thirlmere.

Once the locomotive had been carefully sited at the front of the rolling stock, the landscapers moved in and the final result is the beautiful South Creek Station, welcoming visitors to St Marys.

Nepean News 13 September 2018 Issue

Did you hear about the two blondes who froze to death in a drive-in movie?  
They had gone to see 'Closed for the Winter.'



# **THE TET OFFENSIVE AND THE AUSTRALIAN TASK FORCE**

BY BOB O'NEILL

## **Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia**

### **Annual Commemoration Service Address - 18 August 2018**

Thank you for your kind invitation to speak in this, the fiftieth year after the Tet Offensive, which is now widely recognised as the turning point of the Vietnam War. I am very pleased to be here today because I have found over the years that our comradeship, formed under the stresses of war service in Vietnam, has been one of the most enduring and valued linkages that I have. Most of us, when we returned from service in Vietnam felt some ostracism from people one would normally have expected to be friendly and appreciative of our efforts and of the risks we ran to give service. Gradually these critical or unsympathetic attitudes have moderated, but it has taken a long time to change. Over the years, organisations such as the VVAA have served a very helpful function for all of us.

During the past year I have helped to put together a book on the operations of 5 RAR in late 1966, working with my co-editor Brigadier Ron Boxall, who was a Company 2IC, and I was the battalion Intelligence Officer. Our book has been written by a team of thirty co-authors, giving their perspectives on what we were doing then, from the view points of private soldiers, both regulars and national servicemen, NCOs, platoon commanders and company commanders. We hope to have it on sale early next year.

That work has put me in the groove for preparing this address. It has re-awoken memories of creeping through jungle by day and by night, sometimes wet by monsoon rains and at other times wet by perspiration, of climbing up and down steep, boulder-strewn mountain sides, and, in the villages, of starting conversations with local people who were trying to decide whether we were friendly or a threat to their ways of life.

One of the memories awoken was of our intense training before we went to war in 1966. At least, thanks to the National Service program, we were not short of manpower, but we did lack for some key items of equipment. We made these deficiencies good by bartering with or borrowing from our major allies. And despite the public dissent over the National Service scheme in Australia, all of us, conscripts and volunteers, meshed together well in Phuoc Tuy. Soon the only way you could tell a National Serviceman from a Regular was to check if the second figure of his regimental number was a seven.

We were sent to Vietnam essentially for the sake of good relations with the US. If you scan the records of the Government's decision-making process which led to our being committed to the conflict, you will see that it was not an edifying process. Dr Peter Edwards, the Official Historian for Australia's part in the Vietnam War, has made the story abundantly clear. Phuoc Tuy was chosen in March 1966 as our area of operations for an interesting set of reasons, essentially by Lieutenant General Wilton, Chief of the General Staff. It was a province that could be controlled by an independent brigade-sized force. It was a strategically important area, through which ran the road linking the important port of Vung Tau to Saigon and the major US bases at Bien Hoa and Long Binh. And, if the Americans decided to withdraw from Vietnam in a hurry, we could use that same port of Vung Tau for our own rapid evacuation to safety.

North Vietnamese and Viet Cong Strategy in the War.

Let me now review the strategy of the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong. They had hoped to be able to grind down their Southern opponents by 1965 or 1966. They were supported by China and the Soviet Union, chiefly by weapons and related supplies. But when the Americans made their major military escalation in 1965-66, that Communist hope of early victory vanished. They then faced a very costly conflict with no clear end in sight. They never abandoned hope of victory, but by 1967 they were deeply worried. There were internal divisions within the Communist leadership, and power-struggles took place, ending with the side-lining of their political icon, Ho Chi Minh, and their most experienced military commander, General Vo Nguyen Giap. Ho's relegation was disguised until poor

health led to his death in 1969. Giap removed himself from the scene in 1967, going to Hungary for medical treatment and returning in February 1968. The incoming leadership was dominated by a very tough in-fighter, Le Duan, the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party from 1960 to 1986.

Le Duan had a dramatic plan for victory by launching a huge, all-out attack, to shatter the South Vietnamese armed forces and inflict heavy casualties on the Americans. He hoped in this process to precipitate a General Uprising of the whole South Vietnamese population, destroying the Republic of Vietnam and raising the level of costs that the United States would have to bear to unacceptable levels.

By late 1967 Le Duan had gained approval for his plan. This required making North Vietnam more of a police state than ever it had been, but he got away with it. The patience of his fellow Politburo members had been exhausted by the frustrations of the previous three years of hard-fought stalemate. The Communist leadership desperately wanted to have finished with the war, and were willing to accept the risks inherent in Le Duan's plan. Little did they know that the war had another seven years to run!

They decided to launch the great offensive at Tet, the Lunar New Year, in 1968, ie at the end of January. Preliminary orders were sent out in December 1967. It was particularly important for them to reach the Viet Cong in the south quickly, because they had to prepare for and carry the main weight of the attacks. Reinforcements were sent by the North to the South. North Vietnam's principal allies, the Soviet Union and China, had to be briefed and brought on side with the plan, which was complicated by the severe split which had opened up between the two Communist great powers. Mao was concerned that the Vietnamese were embarking on a Soviet-style offensive which would call for heavy Soviet weapons and aircraft, giving Moscow increased influence in the conflict. The Chinese wanted to keep military operations to a more moderate level, where they would have more influence. Le Duan dismissed Mao's views, and preparations went forward with urgency for a major attack in January 1968.

Let me now turn to consider the impact of the Tet Offensive on the First Australian Task Force in Phuoc Tuy. The focal point for the major Viet Cong attack there was, naturally, Ba Ria, the province capital. Were we surprised by the attack? The Americans had picked up some indications of a large scale movement of Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces in early January. But as the month progressed there was a suspicious lack of enemy action, including complete radio silence. Clearly something big was about to happen, but what? Viet Cong security was good and we lacked really firm evidence of their intentions. The Communist forces achieved strategic surprise. This result had been helped by a Viet Cong offer of a truce over the Tet period. While this proposal raised obvious challenges for the Americans and South Vietnamese, they accepted it for the sake of good relations with the South Vietnamese civil population because Tet was such a great occasion for family gatherings and festivities.

None the less the commander of the US II Field Force, Lieutenant General Frederick Weyand, felt that he had to take some precautions. There must be some threat behind this cessation of Viet Cong activities, such as a build-up for an offensive. He was concerned principally about the security of the main US bases at Bien Hoa, Long Binh and Bear Cat, east of Saigon and north-west of the Australian base at Nui Dat. Weyand knew that his foes had available mid-range Soviet rockets which could do great damage to the main US bases. He decided to occupy several possible enemy fire base sites north-west of Phuoc Tuy, in order to pre-empt such attacks.

Although the Australian Task Force, now three battalions strong, was intended to serve only within Phuoc Tuy, the Australian Commander in Saigon, Major General Tim Vincent, decided to make his force available to protect the approaches to the US bases. 2 and 7 RAR were sent off on this mission, Operation Coburg, in late January, leaving 3 RAR to secure the base at Nui Dat. Soon C Company of 3 RAR was sent to join 2 and 7 RAR, leaving only three companies to defend Nui Dat and respond to any Viet Cong attacks elsewhere in Phuoc Tuy. We had rapidly become over-stretched.

The Viet Cong had their eyes mainly on Saigon, not far west of Bien Hoa, and the other big bases nearby, as their objectives. They committed their Fifth Division, including our old sparring partners

274 and 275 Regiments, to this operation. They also prepared an attack on Ba Ria, to be carried out by D445 Provincial Mobile Battalion and local units, a force of some 600 men, whose principal fire support was mortars and machine guns. The Fifth Division attack went ahead, achieving some substantial results for the Viet Cong, but at a heavy cost in casualties. Our two battalions suffered ten killed and seventy-five wounded in blocking operations against enemy movement east of Bien Hoa. The Viet Cong lost 145 killed, 110 were wounded but escaped, and another five were captured. They lost over 100 weapons, considerable quantities of ammunition, mines and rockets, and 1600 kilograms of rice. General Weyand warmly congratulated Brigadier Hughes, Commander of 1 ATF, on these results.

While Operation Coburg had been proceeding, Ba Ria received its share of attention from the Viet Cong. D445 Battalion came south and based itself in the Nui Dinh hills, eight kilometres north-west of Ba Ria. Its approach march had taken longer than planned, and D445 did not make its assault until dawn on 1 February. Two companies of D445 attacked from the south of Ba Ria. Very soon A Company, 3 RAR, the designated Task Force Ready Reaction Company, commanded by Major Hori

continued next page;

## **IF YOU, OR A VETERAN YOU KNOW, IS FEELING**



**THEN IT'S TIME FOR A CHAT WITH OUR WELFARE OFFICERS  
VISIT THE VETERANS CENTRE, LOCATED IN**

**“THAT TRAIN”**

**CNR MAMRE ROAD and HALL STREET ST MARYS**



## **THE BEST TIME TO ACT IS NOW!**



Howard, was on its way in APCs to counterattack the Viet Cong and drive them out of the province capital. Because of a suspected Viet Cong approach to Nui Dat from the west, 1 Platoon of A Company had already been sent out to reconnoitre, leaving Howard with only two platoons to secure and defend Ba Ria. At least he was reinforced by the firepower of the APCs (M113s) of 3 Troop of A Squadron of the 3<sup>rd</sup> (Australian) Cavalry Regiment, under 2 Lt R.L.M.Tingley. A Company was also supported by a small group of South Vietnamese soldiers.

Howard decided to approach Ba Ria at speed to minimise the risk of being ambushed. The leading APC had no infantry aboard in case it hit an ambush or a mine. A Company arrived in Ba Ria not long after a battle around the local US headquarters. Colonel Austin, the local US commander, indicated two other areas under enemy pressure in Ba Ria, a group of advisers' houses on the south side of the town and an Administration and Logistics Compound in the north-western sector. Austin begged Howard to deploy his force to secure both places.

Howard's two platoons were a slender force for covering both tasks. He decided to accept the risks involved but his difficulties were compounded when over half of 3 Platoon mistakenly remained with Company HQ, leaving the Platoon Commander, Lieutenant Harry Clarsen, with only eleven men out of twenty-five at the Compound.

To make matters worse, both his APCs disappeared without warning at high speed after moving his small force to the Compound, taking his radio with them. This left Howard and Clarsen without direct communications at the beginning of what was going to be a very challenging period. Clarsen was able to establish control over the Compound, after a hard-fought battle with the occupying Viet Cong, supported by a passing US F-100 Super Sabre on combat air patrol. The Compound had four towers, two of which the Viet Cong held strongly with machine guns. A combination of air and ground attacks forced the Viet Cong to surrender, and the first stage of the battle was won. Meanwhile 2 Platoon, led by Lt Peter Fraser, fought its own war, defeating a VC company attack on the advisers' sector and rescuing several Americans.

Time prevents me from expanding on the details of A Company's actions in the battle for Ba Ria and on the struggle for the town of Long Dien, five kilometres to the east. This action took place from 3 to 9 February, when B and D Companies of 3 RAR, engaged parts of D445 Battalion. For those interested in the battle for Ba Ria, I commend Major General Howard's two articles in the Australian Infantry Magazine, written with the assistance of his two platoon commanders, Peter Fraser, 2 Platoon, and Harry Clarsen, 3 Platoon.

continued next page;

## **MICHAEL JOHN FITZGERALDSOLICITOR**

**Level 8**

**65 York Street Sydney 2000**

**Phone: 9283 2500 or 0419 440 990**

**FAX: 9283 2600.**

**ABN 18095746334**



The bravery and skill shown by our men in these actions was recognised in the decorations awarded afterwards. Howard and Tingley were both awarded Military Crosses. Major Peter Phillips, commanding D Company of 3 RAR, and Lieutenant M R John, commanding 11 Platoon, also received Military Crosses for their parts in the battle for Long Dien. In addition Captain J Coggan, a helicopter pilot, received a Distinguished Flying Cross, Corporal J J Davis, a medic with A Company, received a Military Medal, and eight others, including Lieutenant Fraser and Major H W Irwin, Commander of B Company, were Mentioned in Despatches. Hori Howard and Peter Phillips both went on to become Major Generals. 3 RAR's success was all the more notable because these actions were fought by men who had been in Vietnam for only a month, and who had received no training at all in urban warfare before the battle.

Let me return to the strategic level. The Tet Offensive was a military disaster for the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong. Their losses in the opening phase were 45,000 killed and a much larger number of wounded. South Vietnamese and allied losses were 4,300 killed and 16,000 wounded. The hoped-for general uprising of the South Vietnamese people did not eventuate. All in all, it was a disappointing result for the Communists, and pointed to the war continuing for many years. However, as General Tran Do, Deputy Commander of all Communist forces in South Vietnam, concluded:

*"In all honesty, we didn't achieve our main objective, which was to spur uprisings throughout the South. Still, we inflicted heavy casualties on the Americans and their puppets, and this was a big gain for us. As for making an impact in the United States, it had not been our intention—but it turned out to be a fortunate result."*

The Tet Offensive was, in the long run, a successful undertaking by the Communists, but for wholly different reasons to those for which their offensive was undertaken. None the less, in the hour of extreme need, when 64 province and district capitals, and all major allied airbases in South Vietnam, were under attack, the 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Task Force distinguished itself, earning warm praise from our allies. The Royal Australian Regiment was awarded the battle honour "Bien Hoa", to mark the valour with which they fought at Tet 1968. Fifty years on, we say "Well done" to all who took part, particularly to those who are here today.

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ANL - That Huey.....	20
Allan Duncan Real Estate .....	3
Blacktown and Districts TPI Social and Welfare Club.....	15
Heavenly Celebrations Funerals .....	6
Michael John Fitzgerald - Solicitor.....	27
Nepean News .....	11
St Marys RSL Club .....	18
St Marys RSL Bowlers Club .....	22
St Marys RSL Youth Club.....	19
Untamed Flowers .....	14
Western Hire Cars .....	21

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John Davison - Editor

# REMEMBRANCE DAY - AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL



Tributes and Reflections



Daphne Dunne (of Prince Harry fame) with Daniel Keighran VC and Dr Brendan Nelson, Director AWM



John & Marjorie Worsley (parents of Luke Worsley KIA Afghanistan 2007) and Vin & Nancy Cosgrove, VVAA St Marys Outpost Sub Branch, lay tributes at the Pool of Reflection, AWM 11/11/18

*...for we are young and free*