

**VIETNAM VETERANS ASSOCIATION of AUSTRALIA
VICTORIAN BRANCH (INC)**



MELBOURNE WEST SUB-BRANCH

NEWSLETTER

March 2009

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Western Suburbs Veterans' and Services Centres

12 Smith Street (PO Box 981)
Melton 3337
Phone: 9746 9582 Fax: 9746 9583
Mondays to Thursdays

Kelly Park Community Centre
4 Synnot Street (next to RSL Club)
Werribee 3030
Ph: 9731 1608 (Wed only)
Wednesdays 10:00 till 14:00
Email: werribeevetcentre@westnet.com.au

Pensions: **Positions are Vacant**
Welfare: Vic Pilch 9749 5281

Inner Metro Veterans' and Services Centre

Ph: 9282 3518 Fax: 9282 7854

Disclaimer

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Editor: Sub-Branch Committee -- Publisher: Tony Hind

From Vic (President):



Welcome to the New Year everyone.

The Sub-Branch held it's AGM on the 1st February with (surprisingly) no changes to the executive positions. Gary Williamson did not seek re-election due to failing health. However, two new bods stood up to the mark for Committee positions and they are Barrie Rice and Duane Henley, welcome we appreciate the help. Turnout for the AGM was fairly disappointing with only 16 of 62 Ordinary members bothering to turn up. Our guest speaker and special guest Bob Elworthy could not make it either with family commitments related to the bushfires.

Our audited statements for the Welfare fund and returns for the General for 2008 account have been forwarded ahead of the required time.

Despite not having our own local Pension Officers, we have been busy maintaining the Veterans' Resource Centre at Kelly Park Werribee with assistance from the Melton Vet Centre. We sent one member to attend the Welfare course and two members to attend the pension course at Sale conducted by TIP in February.

Membership renewals for 2009 are looking good with 63 financial Members (41 Ordinary, 2 Second Members and 20 Associates) at the end of February. We are picking up a number of Associate Members through our links with the various RSL's in our catchment area. Our practice of rotating our monthly Committee meetings at the RSL's has developed an excellent rapport between our organisations and a number of RSL Members now attend our social functions.

The Veterans' Resource Centre which is an offshoot with the Melton Centre services a fairly large slice of Melbourne's Western Suburbs and operates one day a week handling VEA, MCRS and War Widows claims as well as undertaking Hospital and nursing home visits and Veteran's Funeral Services on behalf of the RSL. The Centre is also a 'drop in' site for Veterans seeking some comradeship. We are appreciative of the logistical and financial support we receive from the RSL and this is supplemented by the sale of some merchandise.

Our Committee is keen to improve welfare services particularly to those Vets who may have 'slipped through the net' and we will be working hard on this in 2009. We will also increase the activities program during 2009 to increase fellowship for members and their partners. As in previous years some of our Members have volunteered to assist the Darwin Defenders Association on the 19th February with their commemoration at the Shrine of Remembrance.

Our sincere sympathy is extended to those Vets who have lost loved ones and property in the recent catastrophic bushfires in Victoria and the floods to the North.

Vic Pilch

Honour the Dead ... but fight like hell for the living

From Tony (Secretary/Treasurer):



G'Day everyone and even though we are well into it, welcome to the New Year. For those self funded retirees and those who are relying on lifetime savings for either total or partial income (like me) I offer my commiserations. It seems that predictions are that it will get worse before it gets better. Let's hope it is sooner rather than later.

I would like to say a big welcome to all the new Members that have joined for 2009. Our Membership numbers remain fairly static because as we gain some new members, others drop off and either join other Sub-Branches or do not renew at all. To the Vietnam Vets that do not renew at all, I plead with you to stay in touch, we are there for each other and all too often some of you fall through the net and we don't get to hear if you need anything till it's well after the fact or too late. So I ask that those that have not renewed their membership to do so as soon as possible. Otherwise the State and National office drops you of the list when Capitation fees (part of your membership fee) is not received. I will be sending separate reminders out soon.

Congratulations to Francis (Fran) Ruddle on completing the basic welfare course in Sale. Fran is a relatively new member and is a Veteran in her own right having served as a nurse in Vietnam. Also congrats to Barrie and Duane who completed the basic Pension Officer course. It is a huge responsibility to be a pension officer.

Members are also advised that the Sub-Branch has donated a hospital bed to the Repat Hospital in Heidelberg. The bed was originally purchased by the Sub-Branch for one of our local Members who no longer needs it.

This year we are going to continue rotating our monthly Committee meetings around the Western Suburbs RSLs. Any member is more than welcome to attend these meetings to see how the Sub-Branch is run and organised. We have changed the date and times of our meetings to the second Monday of the month at 11:00 am. The next two meetings will be held at:

Monday 13/04/2009 at Altona RSL at 11:00 am
Monday 11/05/2009 at Footscray RSL at 11:00 am

Anzac Day is not far away now and while we have not yet been approached by the Schools that we have formed associations with, I am sure we will be invited along again to talk to the Students. T

The Committee is organising an Anzac Day Dinner again this year. The dinner will be at the Werribee RSL and with generous subsidies from the RSL, Vaux Hospitality and your Sub-Branch, the cost of the night to Members will only be \$15.00. We are trying to secure a guest speaker and there will be entertainment. See also the separate notice elsewhere in this newsletter.

Friday 17/04/2009 at Werribee RSL at 7:00 pm

The traditional Pre Anzac Day March will also be held on the following date.

Honour the Dead ... but fight like hell for the living

Sunday 19/04/2009 at 1:50pm form to up 2:20pm at Wyndham Cultural Centre.

I would also like to say thank you again to Benlor Real Estate for their kind donation towards the production costs of this newsletter.

Stay well

Tony

From Ray (Asst. Secretary/Treasurer):



DARWIN DEFENDERS 1942 – 1945

COMMEMORATION CEREMONY 2009

On 19th February 2009 five of our members Pierre Goss, Vic Pilch, Ian Patrick, Bogie Knight and Ray Matthew were privileged to assist the dwindling ranks of the Darwin Defenders to commemorate the 67th Anniversary of the bombing of Darwin. This was the 4th year that members of our Sub-branch have volunteered to assist the Darwin Defenders Association to ensure that everything ran smoothly.

A very impressive ceremony was conducted at the Shrine of Remembrance, Melbourne on a fairly hot day where there was a good turnout of senior representatives of the three tiers of government, the services, industry, Japanese and American embassies, schools, Shrine Trustees, various RSL's, and the general public.

It was great to see some of elderly Darwin Defenders in their late eighties and nineties insisting on proudly marching behind their banner from the Shrine forecourt to the Cenotaph. Similarly, it was impressive to see the number of school children who participated and laid wreaths and/or poppies.

The Chairman of the Melbourne Committee of Darwin Defenders 1942-1945 Inc. Mr Ken Davison wrote a letter of appreciation for the support provided by our volunteers at the event.

Members should consider volunteering for future commemorations as it is a personally rewarding experience.

Kind Regards
Ray Matthew

#7 Myth: The common belief is that the fighting in Vietnam was not as intense as in World War II.

FACT: The average infantryman in the South Pacific during World War II saw about 40 days of combat in four years. The average infantryman in Vietnam saw about 240 days of combat in one year thanks to the mobility of the helicopter. One out of every 10 Americans who served in Vietnam was a casualty. 58,148 were killed and 304,000 wounded out of 2.7 million who served. Although the percent that died is similar to other wars, amputations or crippling wounds were 300 percent higher than in World War II ...75,000 Vietnam veterans are severely disabled. MEDEVAC helicopters flew nearly 500,000 missions. Over 900,000 patients were airlifted (nearly half were American). The average time lapse between wounding to hospitalization was less than one hour. As a result, less than one percent of all Americans wounded, who survived the first 24 hours, died. The helicopter provided unprecedented mobility. Without the helicopter it would have taken three times as many troops to secure the 800 mile border with Cambodia and Laos (the politicians thought the Geneva Conventions of 1954 and the Geneva Accords or 1962 would secure the border).

(Source - Capt. Marshal Hanson, U. S. N. R (Ret.) Capt. Scott Beaton, Statistical Source)

Honour the Dead ... but fight like hell for the living

Thursday, 19 February 2009
016/2009

RETIREMENT OF THE DHC-4 CARIBOU

The Minister for Defence, the Hon. Joel Fitzgibbon MP, today announced the Government has accepted the reality that it will be necessary to bring forward the retirement of Australia's remaining thirteen DHC-4 Caribou aircraft to December 2009.

"The Government has been left with little choice but to retire the Caribou and has reluctantly agreed to do so despite the fact that poor planning by the former Government has denied us the opportunity to produce a replacement aircraft before 2013," Mr Fitzgibbon said.

"After 45 years of tireless and distinguished service with the Royal Australian Air Force, the Caribou fleet is suffering badly from a range of ageing aircraft issues, and contains asbestos parts which I am determined to weed out of the Defence Force."

The Royal Australian Air Force took delivery of its first Caribou in April 1964. The Caribou has a proud 45-year history of supporting Australian Defence Force operations, throughout the South West Pacific and in South East Asia, including active service in Vietnam, humanitarian relief in Kashmir, Cambodia and Papua New Guinea and also in support of peacekeeping operations in the Solomon Islands and East Timor.

Despite its outstanding track record, the Caribou is now well beyond its sustainable life of type. The Caribou fleet suffers from corrosion, fatigue and obsolescence issues that make them increasingly difficult and costly to maintain.

"Air Force is struggling to achieve four to five serviceable aircraft at any one time," Mr Fitzgibbon said.

"In fact, it is a tribute to the outstanding work of 38 Squadron aircrew, technicians and support personnel that the Caribou has been able to operate as long as it has.

"The reality is that a decision should have been taken a long time ago on acquiring a tactical airlift capability to replace the Caribou. The Government has been left with no other option than to rectify yet another shortcoming we have inherited in transition planning across our entire Air Force fleet," Mr Fitzgibbon said.

Project Air 8000 Phase 2 plans to deliver a Tactical Battlefield Airlift capability for the Royal Australian Air Force to replace the Caribou in 2013.

"Options for bringing forward the schedule on this project are being considered as part of the White Paper process," Mr Fitzgibbon said.

As an interim measure, a leased fleet of five additional Hawker Pacific B300 King Air aircraft will undertake light air transport tasks. These aircraft will be phased into the Townsville-based 38 Squadron as the Caribou is progressively retired toward the end of 2009. Three King Air 350 aircraft, currently operated by Army, will also be transferred across to 38 Squadron.

"The interim King Air lease will help Air Force minimise the adverse workforce issues that result from allowing gaps to develop in transitioning aircraft fleets," Mr Fitzgibbon said.

"It is important that we honour the debt of gratitude we owe to the men and women who have supported the Caribou for so long by providing a means for them to maintain their skills and streamline their transition to a more modern and capable replacement aircraft."

The King Air is a modern aircraft with digital avionics, advanced displays and navigation systems and turbine engines, that will assist in transitioning 38 Squadron aircrew and technicians to the more modern aircraft types being considered under Project Air 8000 Phase 2.

"Our nation is extremely proud of the magnificent service that the Caribou has provided to the Royal Australian Air Force over the past five decades. While there may be some who are saddened to hear of the Caribou's impending retirement, even the most vocal supporters of the Caribou will agree this decision is long overdue."

"The men and women of 38 Squadron have been waiting for many years to know what the future holds. Today's decision gives reassurance to them that the Government is very aware of both the challenges they face in trying to sustain such an ageing aircraft and the career management uncertainty that has been unnecessarily forced upon them after so many years of empty promises and inaction," Mr Fitzgibbon said.

Media contacts:

Jack Smith (Joel Fitzgibbon): 02 6277 7800 or 0408 116 423

Defence Media Liaison: 02 6265 3343 or 0408 498 664

THE HON JOEL FITZGIBBON MP

Minister for Defence

When a Veteran leaves the 'job' and retires to a better life, many are jealous, some are pleased, and others, who may have already retired, wonder if he knows what he is leaving behind, because we already know.

1. We know, for example, that after a lifetime of camaraderie that few experience, it will remain as a longing for those past times.

2. We know in the Military life there is a fellowship which lasts long after the uniforms are hung up in the back of the closet.

3. We know even if he throws them away, they will be on him with every step and breath that remains in his life. We also know how the very bearing of the man speaks of what he was and in his heart still is.

These are the burdens of the job. You will still look at people suspiciously, still see what others do not see or choose to ignore and always will look at the rest of the Military world with a respect for what they do; only grown in a lifetime of knowing.

Never think for one moment you are

escaping from that life. You are only escaping the 'job' and merely being allowed to leave 'active' duty.

So what I wish for you is that whenever you ease into retirement, in your heart you never forget for one moment that you are still a member of the greatest fraternity the world has ever known.

NOW! Civilian Friends vs. Veteran Friends Comparisons

CIVILIAN FRIENDS: Get upset if you're too busy to talk to them for a week.

VETERAN FRIENDS: Are glad to see you after years, and will happily carry on the same conversation you were having the last time you met.

CIVILIAN FRIENDS: Have never seen you cry.

VETERAN FRIENDS: Have cried with you.

CIVILIAN FRIENDS: Keep your stuff so long they forget it's yours.

VETERAN FRIENDS: Borrow your stuff for a few days then give it back.

CIVILIAN FRIENDS: Know a few

things about you.

VETERAN FRIENDS: Could write a book with direct quotes from you.

CIVILIAN FRIENDS: Will leave you behind if that's what the crowd is doing.

VETERAN FRIENDS: Will kick the crowd's arse that left you behind.

CIVILIAN FRIENDS: Are for a while.

VETERAN FRIENDS: Are for life.

CIVILIAN FRIENDS: Have shared a few experiences...

VETERAN FRIENDS: Have shared a lifetime of experiences no citizen could ever dream of...

VETERAN FRIENDS: Will forward this (it was originally an email).

CIVILIAN FRIENDS: Will take your drink away when they think you've had enough.

VETERAN FRIENDS: Will look at you stumbling all over the place and say, 'You better drink the rest of that before you spill it!' Then carry you home safely and put you to bed..

CIVILIAN FRIENDS: Will talk crap to the person who talks crap about you.

VETERAN FRIENDS: Will knock them the hell out OF THEM..for using your name in vain.

CIVILIAN FRIENDS: Will ignore this.

A veteran - whether active duty, retired, or reserve- is someone who, at one point in their life, wrote a blank cheque made payable to 'The Government of Australia for an amount of 'up to and including my life' . . . And military wives are as much veterans as their spouses.

From one Veteran to another, it's an honour to be in your company. Thank you Veterans.

On the 1st March Altona RSL had a very moving dedication ceremony for the installation of a Long Tan Cross at the RSL and we were invited. A copy of our thank you letter written by Ray is below.

4th March 2009

Ms Patricia Franks
Secretary
Altona RSL Sub Branch Inc.
P.O. Box 37
ALTONA Vic 3018



Dedication of the Long Tan Cross at Altona RSL.

Left: Alan Scott
Right: John Coward (ex 9RAR)

Dear Pat,

RE: LONG TAN CROSS UNVEILING CEREMONY

On behalf of our President Vic Pilch I would like to thank you and your Committee and Members for the kind invitation extended to our Committee for the unveiling of your new Long Tan cross last Sunday including the refreshments that followed.

Those of us that were able to attend were moved by the occasion and greatly appreciated the opportunity to lay a wreath in memory of our fallen comrades. I personally was sorry that I was unable to attend due to another commitment.

I understand from Alan Scott that your Sub Branch has kindly offered us the use of your facilities for our next monthly Committee Meeting on 13/4/2008. We look forward to seeing you then.

Thank you once again for your invitation.

Yours Sincerely, **(Ray Matthew) Acting Secretary**

Honour the Dead ... but fight like hell for the living



Australian Government
Department of Veterans' Affairs

Voluntary Work Policy

DVA regards voluntary work in the same way for all three Acts it administers, the VEA, the SRCA and the MRCA.

There is no legislated definition of voluntary work in any of these Acts. However, in policy terms, voluntary work is defined as unpaid work for a recognised community or welfare organisation.

DVA encourages veterans and members of the ex-service community to volunteer to assist community or welfare groups. Many thousands of veterans provide immeasurable support to ex-service organisations and other charities. Studies have also shown that volunteering has physical, psychological and social benefits.

Undertaking voluntary work of this nature does not trigger a reassessment of incapacity payments under either the SRCA or the MRCA. It is accepted that the conditions of engagement in volunteering cannot necessarily be equated to remunerative work given the person generally works at their own pace and time and is not be subject to the conditions normally applied to paid employment.

Recipients of incapacity payments should be aware of how some other unpaid work may affect their benefits. Unpaid work for family, friends or a business enterprise formed for the purposes of making a profit is not classified as voluntary work.

For example, a recipient of incapacity payments and/or certain disability pensions who works several hours in a job that aims to make a profit may be found to be able to undertake paid work, and therefore ineligible for their current rate of payment. The same person volunteering as an advocate, pension or welfare officer would not be deemed capable of paid work purely on the basis of that voluntary work alone.

Under the MRCA and the SRCA, incapacity payments are regularly reviewed. The review assesses a person's ability to earn during the period and is based on rehabilitation and specialist medical assessments. The assessments take into account physical and mental capacities, skills and training, work history, age and so on. Voluntary work is not a trigger for the review and does not of itself imply that someone is able to undertake remunerative work. In fact, voluntary work with a community or welfare group is most often beneficial to a person's wellbeing.

References in SRCA and MRCA legislation to "capacity for rehabilitation" or "capacity for work" do not automatically translate to mean that a person who is undertaking voluntary work has a capacity to do paid work.

If a person is concerned about their voluntary work, or their plans to undertake voluntary work, they can contact DVA for advice on 133 254.

Department of Veterans' Affairs
February 2009

#8 Myth: Kim Phuc, the little nine year old Vietnamese girl running naked from the napalm strike near Trang Bang on 8 June 1972..... shown a million times on American television.... was burned by Americans bombing Trang Bang.

FACT: No American had involvement in this incident near Trang Bang that burned Phan Thi Kim Phuc. The planes doing the bombing near the village were VNAF (Vietnam Air Force) and were being flown by Vietnamese pilots in support of South Vietnamese troops on the ground. The Vietnamese pilot who dropped the napalm in error is currently living in the United States. Even the AP photographer, Nick Ut, who took the picture, was Vietnamese. The incident in the photo took place on the second day of a three day battle between the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) who occupied the village of Trang Bang and the ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) who were trying to force the NVA out of the

Honour the Dead ... but fight like hell for the living

village. Recent reports in the news media that an American commander ordered the air strike that burned Kim Phuc are incorrect. There were no Americans involved in any capacity. "We (Americans) had nothing to do with controlling VNAF," according to Lieutenant General (Ret) James F. Hollingsworth, the Commanding General of TRAC at that time. Also, it has been incorrectly reported that two of Kim Phuc's brothers were killed in this incident. They were Kim's cousins not her brothers. (Source - Capt. Marshal Hanson, U. S. N. R (Ret.) Capt. Scott Beaton, Statistical Source)

How to start a fight

My wife and I are watching "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire" while we were in bed. I turned to her and said, "Do you want to have sex?"
"No," she answered.
I then said, "Is that your final answer?"
She didn't even look at me this time, simply saying, "Yes."
So I said, "Then I'd like to phone a friend."
And then the fight started....

Saturday morning I got up early, quietly dressed, made my lunch, grabbed the dog, and slipped quietly into the garage. I hooked up the boat up to the truck, and proceeded to back out into a torrential downpour. The wind was blowing 50 mph, so I pulled back into the garage, turned on the radio, and discovered that the weather would be bad all day. I went back into the house, quietly undressed, and slipped back into bed. I cuddled up to my wife's back, now with a different anticipation, and whispered, "The weather out there is terrible."

My loving wife of 10 years replied, "Can you believe my stupid husband is out fishing in that?"

And that's how the fight started ...

My wife and I were sitting at a table at my high school reunion, and I kept staring at a drunken lady swigging her drink as she sat alone at a nearby table.

My wife asked, "Do you know her?"

"Yes," I sighed, "She's my old girlfriend. I understand she took to drinking right after we split up those many years ago, and I hear she hasn't been sober since."

"My God!" says my wife, "Who would think a person could go on celebrating that long?"

And then the fight started....

I rear-ended a car this morning. So, there we were alongside the road and slowly the other driver got out of his car.

Well I couldn't believe it He was a DWARF !!!!!

He stormed over to my car, looked up at me, and shouted, "I AM NOT HAPPY!!!"

So, I looked down at him and said, "Well, then which one are you?"

And then the fight started....

I took my wife to a restaurant. The waiter took my order first.
"I'll have the strip steak, medium rare, please."

He said, "Aren't you worried about the mad cow?"

"Nah, she can order for herself."

And then the fight started

Summary of coming Events

Day	Date	Event	Details
Monday	13/04/2009	Committee Meeting	Altona RSL at 11:00am. All welcome.
Thursday	16/04/2009	Raffle Night	Hoppers Crossing Club. This is one of our few allocated nights in the year to obtain all the proceeds from the night's raffle. All proceeds to Welfare. Please turn up and show your support and buy some raffle tickets. There are great prizes and great company.
Friday	17/04/2009	Anzac Day Dinner	Werribee RSL. A three course meal and entertainment for \$15 per head. Tickets are available by booking with Kay at Werribee RSL.
Sunday	19/04/2009	Pre-Anzac Day March	Meet at Wyndham Cultural Centre from 1:50pm and form up to march at 2:20pm.
Friday	24/04/2009	Thomas Chirnside School Ceremony	Details to be confirmed, however, following tradition, those attending should arrive at the School at 9:30am.
Monday	11/05/2009	Committee Meeting	Footscray RSL at 11:00 am. All welcome.
Sunday	31/05/2009	Bus Trip to the National Vietnam Veterans Museum at Phillip Island	A day trip for this one. Seats for this trip will be limited by the number of seats on the bus. Please call Duane Henley or any Committee Member to reserve places for you and your partner.
Thursday	25/06/2009	Raffle Night	Hoppers Crossing Club. This is one of our few allocated nights in the year to obtain all the proceeds from the night's raffle. All proceeds to Welfare. Please turn up and show your support and buy some raffle tickets. There are great prizes and great company.

We are planning other outings for the year and some of the ideas put forward are listed below. Any other ideas are most welcome just email the Secretary or contact any of the Committee.

- Bus trip to Puckapunyal
- Trip to the Shrine of Remembrance for our own guided tour
- Lunch at Geelong RSL
- Trip to Melton for their Thursday BBQ
- Trip to Queenscliff
- A visit to Diamond Valley Sub-Branch.

Don't forget, any idea for an activity is more than welcome.

Vietnam Veterans' Family Study - An Intergenerational Study

DVA needs Vietnam veterans and Army personnel who served from 1962 to 1975 and their families to take part in a study with the aim of identifying factors that make families resilient. This will give useful information and advice which can be provided to the families of future serving members to support them during their service. The intergenerational study will look at what effect war service in Vietnam may have had on veterans' families health and wellbeing.

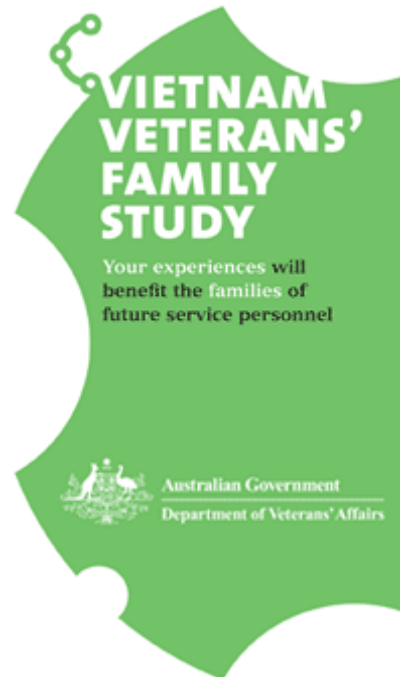
The study has invited 10,000 randomly selected Vietnam veterans and 10,000 randomly selected Army personnel who served from 1962 to 1975 but did not deploy to Vietnam. Invitation packs include extra registration forms for veterans to pass onto family members as each family member needs to register individually.

Air Force and Navy personnel who served during the Vietnam era are also able to participate in the study. These participants will undertake the same survey as Army participants but due to scientific reasons their results will be the focus of a separate report. Similarly, Vietnam veterans who are not part of the randomly selected group and the families of deceased veterans can also register to be part of the study.

The success of the study relies on a big response from those invited. Not just Vietnam veterans and their families but also Army personnel who served during the Vietnam era and their families for comparison. Adequate numbers in the comparison group will ensure the study is scientifically valid and help identify any differences in the health and wellbeing of the families in the two groups. General P J Cosgrove AC MC (Ret'd) has pledged his support for the study and has [written](#) to invited veterans and Army personnel to encourage their participation.

To contact the Family Study Program:

Email healthstudy@dva.gov.au
Phone: 1800 502 302
Mail: Family Study Program
Department of Veterans' Affairs
PO Box 21
WODEN ACT 2606



Remember, it has been the Association that has been lobbying the Government over a number of years to conduct this study. It has been demanded by Vietnam Veterans. Now it is in risk of not proceeding because of Veterans NOT registering.

REGISTER NOW

Honour the Dead ... but fight like hell for the living