



March 2025

It is good to report that thankfully our organisation, dedicated to the wellbeing of Vietnam Veterans and their families, is now in no danger of collapsing. May I introduce our new and dedicated Committee formed with the following people:

Dr David Cockram – President

Ted McEvoy – Vice President

Brian Wall – Secretary

Tony Dickinson – Treasurer

Allan Austin – Member

Ian Holthouse – Member

Peter Heeney – Member

Richard Williams – Immediate Past President

Mark Mackin – Member.

Including the valuable support of:

Joe Newbold – VVAA WA Chaplain (former Navy diver and medic)

Dr Neil MacNeill – VVAA WA Media Author & Editor.

The Committee have decided to next meet at the RAAFA Club, Bull Creek, with our first meeting to be held at 1100hrs to 1230hrs on Monday 14th April 2025. Following the meeting we will have lunch together. **VVAA WA members, either individually or with their family and friends, are warmly invited to join us at 1230pm to enjoy fellowship over lunch.** The RAAFA Club has a healthy and tasteful menu at a reasonable price.

The trains from the south and the north conveniently stop at Bull Creek Station, adjacent to the RAAFA Estate. For those wishing to catch the train to Bull Creek Station, bus #507 stops opposite the RAAFA Estate. Once the bus departs the station along Leach Highway it will then turn into Bull Creek Drive. Press the bell to advise the bus driver who will then stop at the first stop opposite the RAAFA Estate. Information supplied by RAAFA resident Ted McEvoy. Map is on page 3.

David

VVAA WA President's Report

ANZAC Day 2025

Please join VVAA WA members, their significant others, and those associated with Vietnam Veterans, at the ANZAC Day March starting from the corner of Barrack Street and St Georges Terrace, Perth City, at 0900hrs sharp and concluding at Langley Park. You will spot our VVAA banner at the head of our stepping off point. For those who will attend local marches and Services, both in Perth and in the country or regional areas, we hope your experience will be meaningful and uplifting. Where-ever you live, thank you all for your service to our great country.

At 1100hrs on ANZAC Day, a special Service will be held in St George's Cathedral, 38 St Georges Terrace, Perth. It is a ticketed free-entry event. Tickets are currently easily available by entering your details on the RSL WA Website. Search for ANZAC Day 2025 Cathedral Service.

Vietnam Veterans' Day Service 2025

The Committee is in the process of preparing for the 2025 Service to be held at 1100hrs Sunday 17th August, at our Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Kings Park, off May Drive and near Zamia Café. Now is the time for us to start thinking about our heritage as a unique veteran cohort in Australia's war-time history. So, it would be good if you could bring family members or friends with you to the Service, but if you can't then that is OK.

Lest We Forget

Mrs Sue Maguire at Albany, WA, notified VVAA WA that her husband Phillip, a long-standing VVAA member, died on 29th December 2024. His funeral has been held.

Allan William Cook of York, WA, a VVAA WA member died on 22nd February 2025. His funeral was held on Tuesday 11th March 2025 in the Uniting Church at York. VVAA WA member Kevin Trent, a licenced and authorised Uniting Church Lay Minister, conducted the funeral.

General News

I met recently in Perth with Andrew Nixon, the recently appointed DVA National Senior Chaplain located in Sydney, NSW. DVA is in the process of developing and raising a national chaplaincy organisation of former military chaplains as part of holistic care to veterans and families.

Following a concerned email I sent to DVA, I recently met in Perth with Ms Leonie Nowland, First Assistant Secretary Open Arms, and Mr Michael Burvill, Assistant Secretary for Clinical Operations, DVA, at their request. We discussed Open Arms (OA) staffing both local and national, and policy drivers behind OA staffing levels and processes. The current situation is there are 470 national OA positions, and due to Government policy, of these 117 positions are/were on 18-month contracts with no extensions, with their employment paused post-18 months of employment. They are placed in a pool to wait on changes in government policy. This knowledge has naturally caused concern among some veterans. However, it is important to note that OA services are managing, and those requiring an OA clinical professional will be seen, although with a short waitlist. OA has contracted extra Outposted Counsellors (community clinicians) around Australia. These clinicians are trained veteran and military aware professionals in private practice and supplement in-house clinicians and

provide a spread including to regional and remote areas, where possible. Support can also be sourced with private practitioners paid for by DVA at no cost to the veteran. All veterans with at least one day of full-time service should have a DVA White-Card to cover treatment for all mental-health conditions and recognised/nominated medical conditions.

The Garden of Remembrance, Karrakatta, with plaque walls, has been closed due to safety concerns – built on uncompacted unstable sand. There are 17,000 plaques. The same situation is also in Tasmania. The Office of Australian War Graves in DVA is responsible for maintenance and upkeep. A Project manager has now been employed by DVA. Xray imaging is being used to discover the location of ashes scattered beneath soil without consultation or permission. It has been reported that everything will be eventually demolished with a new garden created and plaques (original, if possible, otherwise new) will be glued to a new wall structure. It has been reported that the Garden is open for the time being until funding can be secured by DVA.

Deputy Commissioner DVA WA Peter King is currently on leave until August 2025 when he resigns. Samantha Patuto is the new DC WA. Past positions: Public Service career at Centrelink Gosnells; Department of Home Affairs past 14 years – Immigration services, Detention in WA, Security. Samantha has been understudying Peter King for last several months. Thank you Peter for your support of all Vietnam veterans.

VVAA National Council and Congress, Canberra, May 2025. David Cockram and Allan Austin will attend.

Facebook VVAA WA page. Due to no use for many years, it was decided to delete the Facebook Page. This should occur soon.

The Committee agreed to a project to video record the historical biography of a significant cross-section of WA Vietnam Veterans. Don Dowling (former Army Chaplain) is prepared to do this. He has much relevant experience. We will seek DVA, Lotterywest, or other funding.

In conclusion, my very warmest regards to you all, and especially as you prepare for and participate or watch this year's ANZAC Day events. I, and your VVAA WA Committee, will be thinking of you. Please reach out to us if we can be of assistance in any way.



Dr David Cockram President VVAA WA
0424 368 670 president@vvaawa.org.au



Navigation: Bull Creek Train Station to RAAF, bus #507

Vietnam War soldiers named on Inman Valley plaque immortalised in book

A story from the ABC about a community finally recognising its Vietnam veterans.

Five young men from the small community of Inman Valley in South Australia left their homes to fight in the Vietnam War. It was nearly 30 years after the end of the war before an honour board with their names was placed in the town's community hall, alongside those who fought in WWI and WWII, and most of them didn't know before being contacted by local historian Jo Lush.

Mrs Lush said she'd often pondered about the men and their stories and she set out to find them and make them "more than just a name on a plaque". Through social media and other means, she tracked down the surviving veterans much to their surprise. Four are still alive and live across the country, from a small farming community in Victoria to the wheatbelt of Western Australia. Sadly, one, Peter Millard, passed away in a car accident in 1968 but his sisters provided anecdotes of his time in the army.



The Vietnam Veteran honour roll was placed at the Inman Valley Hall about 30 years after the war. (*ABC South East SA: Caroline Horn*)

As memories were sparked and the stories flowed, a planned leaflet became a book: **The Vets of the Valley.**

"It's important that they can tell their stories," Mrs Lush said. **But just as important that we have the ears to hear them."**

Full story: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-02-23/vietnam-war-soldiers-of-inman-valley/104894092>

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

Immediate Past President's notes. March 2025

Hi Members,

Not sure if you were expecting to hear from me again or not.

As you will recall, from the December 2024 edition of Contact, the VVAA WA was in Limbo at that time, faced with the possibility of closing, due to lack of member support, being unable to form an executive and committee. I am pleased to say that the VVAA WA has had a reprieve, as a number of members took notice of the situation and the possibility of the association closing. As result, since then a member Dr. David Cockram, indicated his availability to take over the VVAA WA President's position.

During the past couple of months the interim committee have met with David and been able to form a viable executive and committee, enabling the VVAA WA to continue to operate. David has now taken on the VVAA WA State Presidents position, thank you David. I wish David, the executive and committee success in their endeavours, in the future, keeping the VVAA WA viable, with improved member support.



While I stood down as State President, I will still have some involvement in the VVAA WA for some time to come. There are a number of "in progress" issues, of concern to me, and I will continue to pursue these projects to completion.

I will now leave it to your new President, Dr David Cockram, to bring you up to date on the VVAA WA in 2025. Thank you for the opportunity of being VVAA WA President [for too many years], I am looking forward to being able to relax a bit in the future.

Regards,


Richard Williams. OAM

Leisa Russell


 My Mates and I Are Running for Our Veterans!  

This year, my mates and I are taking on the 12km HBF (25th May) Run for a Reason to support the Andrew Russell Veterans Living (ARVL) program, which provides housing and support for veterans in need across WA & SA.

This cause is deeply personal to me – my father, Andrew Russell, served in the SAS and gave his life in Afghanistan. ARVL helps veterans who face homelessness and hardship after service, giving them a place to rebuild their lives.

 How You Can Help:

 Donate – Every dollar makes a difference!

 Share – Spread the word to help us reach more people.

Thank you to those who donated last year for the Port to Pub 2024 Rottnest swim fundraiser.

 14 Event: HBF Run for a Reason – 12km Challenge 25th May

 **Fundraising for ARVL (WA & SA)**

 **Donate here: <https://gofund.me/fe57b62e>**

LOCAL News

Wednesday 27th March 2025

Dawesville RSL Sub-Branch President, Mike Watson & Members invite you to participate in the forth coming Golf Day Challenge & Fundraising event on Thursday March 27, to be held at one of WA's Premier Golf Links - The Cut Golf Club, Dawesville.

The Presentation evening includes Dinner, Live Music, Auctions & Raffles, and non-players are welcome to attend.

‘Players need not be members of any RSL or Service Organisation’ said Dawesville RSL Sub-Branch President Michael Watson, ‘Our goal is to bring together members of the Golfing and Veteran Communities in a fun social setting’.

For a registration form and/or further information contact Events Co-ordinator Pip Watson 0411030766 events.rsldawesville@myyahoo.com

Wednesday 9th April 2025

You are invited to attend this unique ANZAC Youth Parade and Service, the only one of its kind in Western Australia and possibly Australia. Witness up to 1,500 Year 6 Students representing as many as 30 schools, proudly marching to take part in their special ANZAC Youth Service.

CITY OF COCKBURN ANZAC YOUTH PARADE AND SERVICE,
WEDNESDAY – 9th APRIL 2025.

The schools will assemble on the Council Verge, Coleville Crescent at 9.30am. The parade of students will commence at 9.45am and proceed along Spearwood Avenue for the Memorial Service to commence at 10.20am

At the RSL Memorial Park and Field of Poppies Spearwood Avenue (& Sussex St.), Spearwood 6163. Light refreshments will be served at the RSL Hall, 75 Frederick Rd, Hamilton Hill, following the service.

RSVP by Friday 28th March 2025.

Mr Paul Prickett CSM

RSL Vice President

Phone: 0408 406 615

Email: info@cockburnrsl.org.au

Sunday 13th April 2025

The Applecross Sub- Branch of RSL WA will be holding an ANZAC Commemoration Service on Sunday 13 April 2025, at the City of Melville War Memorial, Wireless Hill Park, Ardross at 10.30am. We extend a warm invitation to Officers and members of your organization to participate in the march past and ceremony. Those marching are requested to assemble by 10.15am at the start of the driveway to the memorial, for a 10.30am march off. Medals should be worn, and banners are welcome.

The Melville City Council will provide refreshments at the conclusion of the Service. To assist with the planning of the commemoration, it would be appreciated if you could advise by 8 April whether you will be attending and whether you will be laying a wreath. We do hope you will be able to join us.

Helen Pickering

Applecross.rsl@gmail.com; 0408934573

David Wall- Our New Secretary

Brian and his family live at Jarrahdale.

Brian said, "I was an Operator Signals, 7Sig Regt based at Cabarlah in SE Qld. I was Med Dx at the end of 1986 with a spinal injury from a training accident and was classified TPI not long after.

My orthopaedic surgeon (PC Anderson) convinced me to enrol at university as part of my rehab. I graduated with a 1st in History in 1993, then in '94 was awarded a Cwllth post grad scholarship, which included a year at the Institute of Historical Research in London. My PhD examined the history of the modern concept of veterans' welfare and the birth of today's DVA model. Due to poor health, I was forced to withdraw from the PhD program in 1998 without completing the write-up. I was active for several years in the area of veterans' advocacy until health issues again saw me sidelined."

Brian is a committee member of the local Jarrahdale Bushfire Brigade.

What is AI saying about us?

AI Overview

It's estimated that there are roughly 35,000 Australian veterans of the Vietnam War still living. Here's a more detailed breakdown:

Time Sensitivity:

The number of surviving veterans is constantly decreasing as time passes.

Service Numbers:

More than 50,000 Australian personnel served in Vietnam with 2398 wounded and 521 killed.

How old are most Vietnam vets now?

Ages range from 97 to 55 years old (born between 1918 and 1960). Median age is 68 years. An overwhelming majority of Vietnam Veterans are male while in the civilian population females outnumber males.

Christmas 1967 at Nui Dat- a trip down Memory Lane

At Christmas it is a time for rejoicing and a general "Cease Fire" was honoured. Many Vietnamese villagers living around the Task Force were Catholic refugees who had moved south of the 17th parallel at the time of partition in 1954 and at midnight they fired para-flares to mark Christmas Day. For the diggers- we received lovely, thoughtful parcels packed by the American Red Cross, which were a joy to receive. A big deal was the delivering of "café royal" by the officers, and the cooks made a special effort for Christmas dinner. We also received a small, plasticised card outlining the Geneva Convention in relation to prisoners and the treatment of bodies.

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South Vietnamese want to find and bury their war dead. Why is it so hard?

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The Vietnamese American Foundation and its members, including Hung Tran (right) have been working to repatriate bodies of South Vietnamese soldiers for decades. *(Supplied)*

The Bien Hoa National Military Cemetery outside Saigon — now Ho Chi Minh City — was a "sacred place" before 1975, said Mr Tran, who has lived in Australia for 40 years after fleeing Vietnam as a refugee. But, after the communists took over, they destroyed it. They smashed the tombstones, dug up the graves, and planted trees to cover the land. "Their aim was clear: to erase us from history."

Hung Tran pauses, "I can still see their faces — the men I served with, the ones who didn't come home. They fought, they bled, and they died for their country," said the 73-year-old, who fought for South Vietnam in the Vietnam War. Half a century since the war ended, Mr Tran and others like him are still fighting to locate and bury the bodies of their fallen comrades. "They have no graves. No names. It's like they never existed," he said.

Australian historian, Robert Hall, who has aided the Vietnamese government in locating burial sites of North Vietnamese soldiers and returning personal artefacts recovered from the battlefield, says time is running out to find the remains of South Vietnamese troops.

"It was extremely nasty straight after the war. South Vietnamese military cemeteries were bulldozed by the government," he said. While attitudes have softened and progress had been made, Dr Hall said "added sensitivities" made the logistics of locating remains even more difficult.

Vietnam's ambassador to Australia, Pham Hung Tam, said the government had allowed relatives to restore and relocate graves of South Vietnamese soldiers at cemeteries such as Binh An — formerly the Bien Hoa National Military Cemetery — which is now a civilian cemetery. "Thousands of these graves have been restored by relatives, many of which have been cemented," Mr Tam told the ABC. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-01-26/south-vietnamese-soldiers-long-to-bury-dead-soldiers/104828764>