

Corporal Benjamin Roberts-Smith, VC, MG

For the most conspicuous gallantry in action in circumstances of extreme peril as Patrol Second-in-Command, Special Operations Task Group on Operation SLIPPER.

Corporal Benjamin Roberts Smith enlisted in the Australian Regular Army in 1996. After completing the requisite courses, he was posted the 3rd Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment where he saw active service in East Timor. In January 2003, he successfully completed the Australian Special Air Service Regiment Selection Course.

During his tenure with the Regiment, he deployed on Operation VALIANT, SLATE, SLIPPER, CATALYST and SLIPPER II. Corporal Benjamin Roberts-Smith was awarded the Medal for Gallantry for his actions in Afghanistan in 2006.



On the 11th June 2010, a troop of the Special Operations Task Group conducted a helicopter assault into Tizak, Kandahar Province, in order to capture or kill a senior Taliban commander. Immediately upon the helicopter insertion, the troop was engaged by machine gun and rocket propelled grenade fire from multiple, dominating positions. Two soldiers were wounded in action and the troop was pinned down by fires from three machine guns in an elevated fortified position to the south of the village. Under the cover of close air support, suppressive small arms and machine gun fire, Corporal Roberts Smith and his patrol manoeuvred to within 70 metres of the enemy position in order to neutralise the enemy machine gun positions and regain the initiative.

Upon commencement of the assault, the patrol drew very heavy, intense, effective and sustained fire from the enemy position. Corporal Roberts Smith and his patrol members fought towards the enemy position until, at a range of 40 metres, the weight of fire prevented further movement forward. At this point, he identified the opportunity to exploit some cover provided by a small structure. As he approached the structure, Corporal Roberts Smith identified an insurgent grenadier in the throes of engaging his patrol. Corporal Roberts Smith instinctively engaged the insurgent at point-blank range resulting in the death of the insurgent. With the members of his patrol still pinned down by the three enemy machine gun positions, he exposed his own position in order to draw fire away from his patrol, which enabled them to bring fire to bear against the enemy. His actions enabled his Patrol Commander to throw a grenade and silence one of the machine guns. Seizing the advantage, and demonstrating extreme devotion to duty and the most conspicuous gallantry, Corporal Roberts Smith, with a total disregard for his own safety, stormed the enemy position killing the two remaining machine gunners.

His act of valour enabled his patrol to break-in to the enemy position and to lift the weight of fire from the remainder of the troop who had been pinned down by the machine gun fire. On seizing the fortified gun position, Corporal Roberts Smith then took the initiative again and continued to assault enemy positions in depth during which he and another patrol member engaged and killed further enemy. His acts of selfless valour directly enabled his troop to go on and clear the village of Tizak of Taliban. This decisive engagement subsequently caused the remainder of the Taliban in Shah Wali Kot District to retreat from the area.

Corporal Roberts Smith's most conspicuous gallantry in a circumstance of extreme peril was instrumental to the seizure of the initiative and the success of the troop against a numerically superior enemy force. His valour was an inspiration to the soldiers with whom he fought alongside and is in keeping with the finest traditions of the Australian Army and the Australian Defence Force.



CONTACT!

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



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Dates & Times.

- Saturday, 12th February. ANZAC Cottage. 95th Anniversary. 3.00pm to 6.00pm.
- Monday, 21st February. Committee Meeting. ANZAC Cottage. 7.00pm.
- Sunday, 27th February. AGM. Army Museum. Burt St. Fremantle. 1.00pm.
- Monday, 21st March. Committee Meeting. ANZAC Cottage. 7.00pm.
- April.
- Monday, 18th. Committee Meeting. ANZAC Cottage. 7.00pm.
- Monday, 25th. ANZAC Day.
- 6.00am. Dawn Service
- 7.30am. ANZAC Day Service. Vietnam Memorial.
- From 7.00 am Gunfire Breakfast. Rigby's, Forrest Centre. St. Georges. Tce.
- From 9.00am ANZAC Day Parade. Form up.
- After Parade. Rigby's. Luncheon.
- 5.30pm. Sunset Service. ANZAC Cottage. Mt Hawthorn.

London: Captain Barry Petersen, Vietnam Legend, Sells Medals (December 1, 2010)

Barry Petersen is an AATTVN legend, both in the Australian Army and in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. Now living in Bangkok, he is suffering from cancer.

Captain Petersen was posted to the AATTVN in August 1963, and worked with the Montagnards (Rhade) in Darlac Province. He worked in both military and political contexts because his proximity to the Ho Chi Minh Trail, and the importance of the indigenous minorities. The problem for Petersen became that he was too good at what he did, and while the Viet Cong put a price on his head, the CIA wanted him out of the Highlands after the Montagnard uprising.

Barry moved to Bangkok in 1992 and set up a business consulting company for foreign firms, employing 17 Thais, whom he says have become his de facto family. The 60000 GBP raised from the auction of his medals will be used to help these friends.



President's report January 2011.

Welcome to 2011, the printing press is warmed up and ready to go for another year.

While the year has started off slowly, the Executive have been working behind the scenes, with membership renewals, nominations and preparations for the AGM on the 27th of February. The Editor has been busy cranking up the printing press, for this newsletter.

The Christmas function, held at Fremantle in December, was poorly attended, I thank those members who did turn up. I take responsibility for this, as the newsletter was late coming out, not giving you, the members, adequate notification of the function.

95th Anniversary of ANZAC Cottage. The 12th of February 2011, will mark the 95th Anniversary of the building of the Cottage in 1916. To mark the occasion the Cottage will be open from 3.00pm to 6.00pm, come along, join in the celebration and sing "Happy Birthday". The Westralian Great War Living History Group, with their WW 1 kit and memorabilia, will be there, as well as the RSL display trailer. We are still working on a Band and a Birthday Cake.

Annual General Meeting. The 2011 AGM will be held on the 27th of February, at 1.00pm. I again stress, as I have in the past, that it is important for all members to make an effort to support the W.A State Branch, of your Association, by attending this meeting and consider nominating for an executive or committee position. With Peter and Gloria Fox, standing down from their respective positions, nominations are required for, State Secretary and State Treasurer. To lighten the work load on these two positions, there is need for someone to take over the rolls of, Web Master and Membership Officer. I might add that without a State Secretary and Treasurer, the W.A. State Branch cannot continue to operate. The future of the V.V.A.A. W.A. is in your hands, members.

ANZAC Day 2011. This year ANZAC Day, the 25th of April will fall on Easter Monday. Planning is under way, with the usual V.V.A.A. W.A. services and activities for the day. Following the Dawn Service, the 7.30am Service will be held at the Vietnam Memorial. Bookings have been made at Rigby's for a Gunfire Breakfast, from 7.00am onwards, with a Luncheon and afternoon of entertainment and mateship, to

follow the ANZAC Day March.

Sunset Service, ANZAC Cottage. This evening service will be held at 5.30pm at ANZAC Cottage, in Mount Hawthorn. The Cottage will be open from 4.00pm, prior to the service.

The Future of the V.V.A.A. W.A. Over the past 12 months the Executive have discussed the future of the State Branch, for it to continue to be viable for some years into the future. The options are to attract more Vietnam Veteran members, from the veteran community, that are not and haven't been members in the past or look to expanding our membership base, to include other Veteran groups. From phone calls I get, be it from a veteran or friend of a veteran, ringing to enquire about assistance with a pension or entitlements. Unfortunately there are veterans out there that are not aware of their entitlements or overdue for a review of their pensions, if you know of a mate or someone in the community needing assistance, don't let it go unnoticed, refer them to us, for help.

D.V.A. As you are all aware calls to D.V.A. go to a central call centre, in the eastern states, it can be frustrating, talking to someone, who doesn't know where Midland or Bunbury is, or the distance from the D.V.A. W.A. office. If you can wait, call after 3.00pm, when the eastern states have finished for the day and you should get the Perth office.

V.V.C.S. The 2011 calendar of Group Programs and Services is now available and can be obtained from the Counselling Service, in Applecross, phone 08 64617800 or 1800 555 254. I will have this information posted on the web site, in the near future.

Offer to Vietnam Veterans in W.A. I have recently been contacted by the manager of Don Kyatt Spares, in W.A, offering a 10% discount to all Vietnam Veterans, on their range of 4WD spares and Terrain Tamer, parts and accessories. The Don Kyatt Spares, store is located at, 118 Kewdale Road, Kewdale. They also have dedicated suppliers in, Kalgoorlie, Geraldton and Broome, as well as stores in the Eastern States. I hope to have more information on this offer, available on the website soon. See you on the 27th.

Richard Williams. State President.
V.V.A.A. W.A. A.G.M. 27TH February, 1.00pm.
Army Museum. Burt St. Fremantle.

VIETNAM VETERANS' ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA WA BRANCH INC

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Book Review: Doorway in the Storm by Errol Pentony/

After winning the Rostrum WA "Speaker of the Year" award in the year 2000, Errol Pentony decided it was time to write a book about his experience in the Vietnam War. Errol had served as a Rifleman with 5 Platoon, B Company in 9RAR during 1968 and 1969 and he had a story to tell. His old Platoon Commander General Peter Cosgrove (Retired) kindly offered to write the Foreword to the book which was eventually self published in July 2010.

What Errol calls his first edition only took four months to complete however his Editor called it "gale force writing" and recommended some lightening up. Perhaps that is why the original title was "Vietnam Venom", based upon the poison that Errol carried in his system for thirty years. Errol was never going to change that title until two editions later and much reworking of the material. Then much to his delight it became "Doorway in the Storm" based upon a dream and his desire to show veterans and others what is possible in overcoming emotional blockages and patterns of behaviour.

The story begins in one of his many sessions with the Vietnam Veterans' Counselling Service and takes us

on a journey to discover his voice, his truth, his essence. This involves going back to where it all started, in Vietnam of course. But Errol went further into his childhood and teenage years to see what it was like growing up and what sort of person he was before the "Storm" came. Coming home from Vietnam took a few days on the "Sydney" but Errol never really arrived home until the book was written and his story told.

After thirty years there were three major battles to overcome. His marriage, his career as an accountant, and the way he lived his life.

His book has been sold around Australia through Newsletters like this one and because it is self published you can only get it from him at errolpentony@smartchat.net.au or telephone him on 08.95372668.

Errol now lives near the beach in the coastal suburb of Singleton, just out of Mandurah WA. The book costs \$29.95 and also \$7 for postage, total \$36.95. Many veterans have already provided great feedback and as a result of the publicity surrounding the book, Errol is now in contact with some of his old army mates after forty years.

Subject: ABCTV program researching veterans and prisons

I'm a journalist working for an ABC TV program called Hungry Beast. I'm looking into the rates of incarceration of war veterans, and how problems with drugs or violence that land people in prison may stem from PTSD from traumatic experiences at war. In the US until quite recently 1 in 5 men in prison was a Vietnam vet - I think that speaks volumes about the psychological injuries soldiers sometimes return with that may not be adequately treated. I'm hoping to find out if the same thing has happened in Australia, and if so, if it is happening again to the soldiers coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan.

I'm very keen to get in contact with any Vietnam vets who have spent time in prison or been in trouble with the law - whether that be through violent incidents, drug-related incidents or similar - or family members of veterans who've experienced this. I'd be greatly appreciative if you or anyone in your networks who'd be happy to chat about this could get in touch with me on my mobile 0438 043 928 or via email ali.russell.films@gmail.com.

Ali Russell

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WAKE UP TIME

When the shearing sheds are silent and the stock camps fallen quiet
 When the gidgee coals no longer glow across the outback night
 And the bush is forced to hang a sign, ' Gone broke and won't be back'
 And spirits fear to find a way beyond the beaten track
 When harvesters stand derelict upon the wind swept plains
 And brave hearts pin their hopes no more on chance of loving rains
 When a hundred outback settlements are ghost towns overnight
 When we've lost the drive and heart we had to once more see us right
 When 'Pioneer' means a stereo and 'Digger' some backhoe
 And the 'Outback' is behind the house, there's nowhere else to go
 And 'Anzac' is a biscuit brand and probably foreign owned
 And education really means brainwashed and neatly cloned
 When you have to bake a loaf of bread to make a decent crust
 And our heritage once enshrined in gold is crumbling into dust
 And old folk pay their camping fees on land for which they fought
 And fishing is a great escape; that is until you're caught
 When you see our kids with yankee caps and resentment in their eyes
 And the soaring crime and hopeless hearts is no longer a surprise
 When the name of RM Williams is a yuppie clothing brand
 Not a product of our heritage that grew up off the land
 When offering a hand makes people think you'll amputate
 And two dogs meeting in the street is what you call a 'Mate'
 When 'Political Correctness' has replaced all common sense
 When you're forced to see it their way, there's no sitting on the fence
 Yes one day you might find yourself an outcast in this land
 Perhaps your heart will tell you then, ' I should have made a stand'
 Just go and ask the farmers that should remove all doubt
 Then join the swelling ranks who say, ' Don't sell Australia out.'

[Poet unknown]

.Health and Welfare: TRAVEL

Are you planning to travel overseas?

Australian travellers can become ill while travelling abroad. Many infectious diseases can cause illness and even death and they can be prevented through vaccination.

DVA now pays for overseas travel vaccinations provided within Australia for Gold Card holders, if the vaccine was provided after 1 August 2010.

Vaccination is considered to be the most effective method of preventing infectious diseases. It is also important that overseas travel plans are discussed with an approved medical practitioner to find out if any vaccinations are required before travelling overseas.

Approved medical practitioners administering the overseas travel vaccinations can prescribe clinically required vaccines on an Authority Script. Prior approval can be sought by contacting the Veterans' Affairs Pharmaceutical Advisory Centre 24 hour prior approval free call number 1800 552 580.

Travel Insurance – It is also important that Gold and White Card holders consider taking out travel insurance to cover for treatment of any non-service related conditions should the need arise while travelling overseas.

[authorised- DVA 18th January, 2011]

Infantry Museum: Singleton

The Infantry Museum that is located in the School of Infantry at Singleton was situated inside the base and the displays were within several buildings.

On Wednesday 19th January the sod was turned by Vice Chief of the Army , General Hurley, to start construction on a brand new purpose built museum which will be situated near the main gate. This will allow the public access without having to gain access to the base which was the case up to several months ago. The old museum is now shut until the new one opens on 1st September 2011.

www.infantrymuseum.com.au

New combat armour for Australian soldiers

The first batch of the new Tiered Body Armour System (TBAS) for Australian soldiers in Afghanistan has come off the production line at Australian Defence Apparel (ADA) in Bendigo..

The new body armour system is lighter, fits better, is more comfortable and provides more mobility than the existing body armour our troops use. At the moment our soldiers in Afghanistan wear either the Modular Combat Body Armour System (MCBAS) or the Eagle Marine body armour. MCBAS body armour is very effective, but it's heavy. It was designed for conditions in Iraq where troops weren't regularly required to patrol on foot. In Afghanistan the feedback from troops was it made it difficult to move around and do their job, so Defence made an urgent purchase of the lighter Eagle Marine body armour last year from the United States.

The new TBAS is lighter than both. It also allows troops to insert different types of ballistic plates in the vest depending on their mission. Because it is Australian-made and we own the design we can also make adjustments and improvements at any time to suit the needs of our troops.

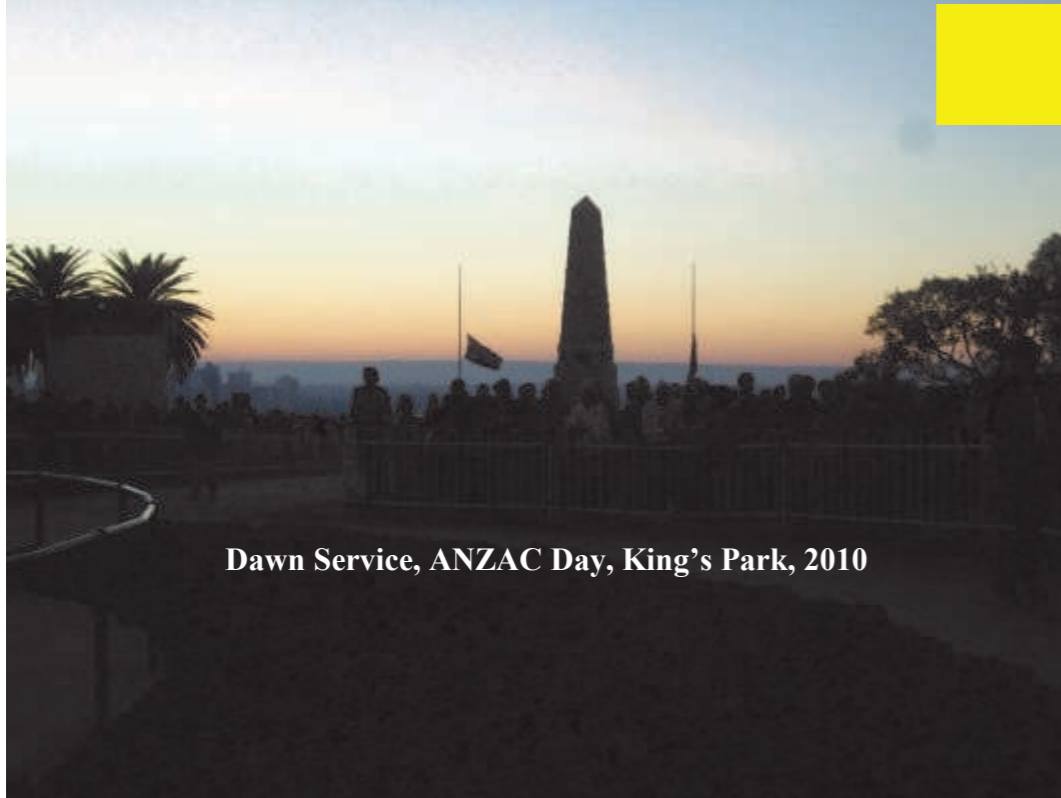
Defence is planning for soldiers from Mentoring Task Force 3 to train in this body armour in April as part of their Mission Rehearsal Exercises and deploy with it when they head to Afghanistan later this year.

ADA will produce around 1,600 tiered body armour systems over the next few months. Over the past 18 months TBAS has been tested and evaluated by Special Forces, Navy clearance divers and soldiers from the 1st Brigade in Darwin, 3RAR in Sydney and 2 RAR in Townsville.

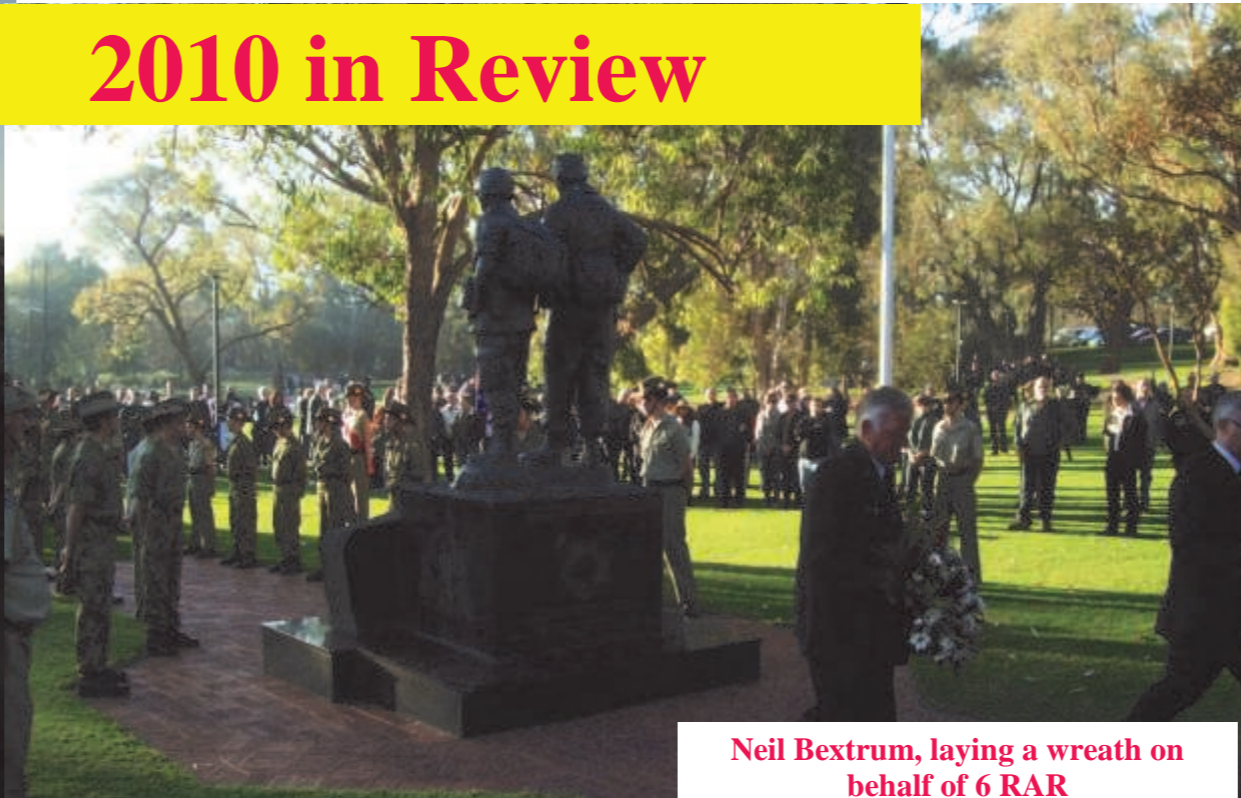
“They told us this was the body armour they want to wear in Afghanistan. “They said it integrates better with their combat equipment and provides much greater freedom of movement, especially around their shoulders. This enables soldiers to get into better firing positions and manoeuvre more freely on the battlefield,” stated the Minister.

Veteranweb Network

2010 in Review



Dawn Service, ANZAC Day, King's Park, 2010



Neil Bextrum, laying a wreath on behalf of 6 RAR ANZAC Day, 2010 Vietnam Memorial Army Cadets, 57 cadet unit, Carine SHS.



Frank Mallard, representing Indigenous servicemen and women.



Vietnam Veterans' Day, 2010

Paul Papalia, CSC, MLA; Capt Brett Dowsing; Luke Simpkins M.P; Brig Steve Cain; Sqdn Ldr Paul Webb; Dr. Margaret Sturdy.



ANZAC Day 2010. North American Veteran Unit led by Capt Mike Donnelly, followed by 100 1/2 year old WW2 veteran, Victor Lane and NAVU President, Michael Munjak.



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

Annual General Meeting. 27th February. 2011. 1.00pm.

Venue. Army Museum. Burt St Fremantle.

Dear members,

This is to update you on the current position, regarding nominations for the State Executive and Agenda for the AGM.

At the close of nominations, the following were received;

State President. Richard Williams.

State Vice Presidents. Ian Holthouse.

Max Ball.

State Secretary. No nominations.

State Treasurer. No nominations.

Committee. Graham Cornwill. 4 more nominations required.

At this time it will not be necessary to conduct an election, hence no Proxy Voting Forms will be distributed to members.

Without nominations being received from the floor, to fill the vacant State Secretary and Treasurer's positions at the AGM, it will be difficult, for the W.A. State Branch to function beyond the 27th of February 2011.

AGM Agenda.

Election of State Executive.

Reports.

Amendments to V.V.A.A. W.A. Constitution.

V.V.A.A. W.A. Constitution. Review/Rewrite Constitution, Bylaws and Policy.

Dates for the end of Financial Year and Membership Year.

Membership Base. Expanded membership criteria.

General Meeting, to follow AGM.

The future of the V.V.A.A. W.A. beyond the 27th of February 2011.

Philip Pascoe Bequest. Suggestions on implementing a project or similar.

V.V.A.A. W.A. Newsletter, are members happy with the newsletter/magazine, format and name.

It was originally called Sitrep, then just a Newsletter, the current edition is Contact.

National Congress 2011. Agenda Items/Motions. Do members have any items, that you would like raised.

Any further General Business items, that members wish to raise.

Membership Renewals.

Have you renewed you membership for 2011.

Please note, if you are intending to come to the AGM and wish to vote, you must be a current financial member.

RSVP'S.

Please advise if you are going to attend the 2011 AGM. It is intended to have the bar open in the Officers Mess, at the conclusion of the meeting, for drinks and nibbles. We need to advise the Army Museum management, if we require the bar to be open, therefore we need to know how many members/partners, will be attending, to make it worth while opening the bar.

RSVP'S, to Richard Williams, 0424 368 679 or 0417 953 346, e-mail president@vvaawa.org.au , asap.

Regards,

Richard Williams.

State President.