

# Southern Highlands Vietnam Veterans Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Association

Website: [www.shvva.com](http://www.shvva.com) CFN 23847

## SEPTEMBER 2023 NEWSLETTER

### SEPTEMBER MONTHLY LUNCH

SCOTTISH ARMS HOTEL

Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> September – 12 noon.

Please RSVP phone Graeme Moffatt 0419 484 482  
before Tuesday 5th

### SEPTEMBER MEN'S LUNCH

SCOTTISH ARMS HOTEL

Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> September – 12 noon.

Please RSVP phone Graeme Moffatt 0419 484 482 before 12 noon on  
Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> September

## VIETNAM *50 Years On*

VIETNAM VETERANS' DAY - Memorial Service Commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Australia's Involvement in the Vietnam War and Vietnam Veterans Day - 20<sup>th</sup> August

The Service was held at the Bowral Vietnam War Memorial and Cherry Tree Walk in Settlers Park, Bowral.

Over 150 attended the service, which paid tribute to those who lost their lives in the Vietnam Conflict. In addition to the veteran community the audience included local MP's, representatives from all local high schools, families, and the public.

A parade of Veterans led by the Oxley College Pipe Band, playing Waltzing Matilda, preceded the service.

Soldiers of the 4/3 Royal NSW Regiment mounted an impressive guard on the memorial throughout the service.

President Graeme Moffatt opened the service saying: "Today we honour and remember the service and sacrifice of some 60,000 Australian men and women who served in the Vietnam War. Tragically, 523 Australians lost their lives and over 3,000 were wounded." He also acknowledged the long-term impact on families, a situation that continues today.



This year is special and marks the 50th anniversary of the end of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War. Following the phased withdrawal over 1971/72 of combat and support units, only 30 lonely and exposed soldiers of the Embassy Guard and Escort Platoon remained in Saigon - until June 1973.

The Guest Speaker was Lieutenant Colonel Gary McKay, MC, OAM (Retired)

Gary spoke of memories that names on the Memorial evoked. Four of the soldiers were killed whilst under his command, during the Battle of Nui Le in September 1971, the last battle fought by Australians.

He said that he always wears his Vietnam Service Medals with immense pride, because although the enemy often did not play by the rules, we did.

He recounted a meeting that he had on a visit to Vietnam, when he was warmly welcomed by a former enemy corporal, who was at the Battle of Long Tan. The corporal said the former Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese Army soldiers respected the Australians because:

"After battle, you took care of our wounded.

After battle, you buried our dead.

You really did something for the people, by building bridges, roads, water supply, schools, medical clinics, and dental clinics, for local villages.

Australians did not commit atrocities!"



Gary said "That is why all Australian Veterans of the Vietnam War should be proud of their service, in what was a very difficult time and a very tough campaign."

Frensham School Speakers, Diana Paicu and Raphaela O'Neill-Siambis, spoke eloquently about a variety of experiences of Australian military personnel in Vietnam, including that of nurses.

After prayers, about 25 wreaths were laid on the Memorial, followed by the haunting sounds of The Last Post and Rouse farewellled the departed.



The marquee and sound system which was provided courtesy of a DVA grant, was very much appreciated although the Highlands turned on a cracker spring day.

### Luncheon

After the Service, a luncheon, sponsored by the Mittagong RSL Club was held to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Southern Highlands Vietnam Veterans' Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Association. With 65 present Gary Mckay was again the Guest Speaker and Norm Austin, Secretary of the SHVVPPA recounted its history.

The function was a sell-out, the food was very good, and the level of chatter indicated that all present enjoyed the occasion.

Special thanks go to Mittagong RSL Club whose grant sponsored the event.

### VIETNAM VETERANS DAY

In the morning we held a short service at the Vietnam War Memorial to acknowledge the importance of the day and reflect on those who gave their lives in the serviced of Australia. We then retired to the Military Vehicle Museum.

This function was attended by a wide range of people including our members. The vibe was good and in the spirit of harmony and healing.

The first highlight was the flyover of two Vietnam Veterans - Caribou from the Historic Aircraft Restoration Society at Albion Park, which by the way is well worth a visit.



The second, was a short speech by Sgt Tom Lewis, 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment Royal Australian Artillery, who was flown down from Townsville to commemorate the Anniversary with our Sub-Branch. Tom presented a book to Vinh Tran detailing the history of the 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment, including two tours of Vietnam.

**COFFEE CLUB.** Every Thursday at 10:00 in the Café at Mittagong RSL Club –**except on the last Thursday of the month** when it is in the Nui Dat RnR Center in the Military Vehicle Museum

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