

THE EYES and EARS

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Detachment 131 Divisional Locating Battery RAA

Unit Citation for Gallantry (UCG) awarded to the Detachment and those who served at
The Battles of Coral/Balmoral in South Vietnam, 1968

2023 – 57 Years and the Detachment 131 Spirit Lives On: 1966 – 1971



131 LOCATORS ASSOCIATION
NOTICE BOARD

SEASONS GREETINGS

2023

WISHING YOU ALL
**A VERY HAPPY
CHRISTMAS**

We hope you enjoy the
time - relax and
contact family and
friends...

A Date, a Place in Time to Remember – We go back some 31 years...

Vietnam: Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial, Canberra

(Department of Veterans' Affairs Publisher)

A poignant moment in Australia's history occurred on Saturday 3 October 1992 with the dedication of the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial.

Exactly five years earlier, 25,000 veterans of the Vietnam War had participated in the Welcome Home Parade in Sydney. For many, this parade was a time for reunions; for others, it was a step in a long personal journey from their war service to recognition as veterans. The dedication of the memorial honouring all Australians who served in Vietnam was another, emotional step in this journey.

The memorial honours, in particular, the 521 Australians who died in the service of their country. As one veteran reflected, 'Sydney was for those who came home. This weekend [of the dedication] is for those who didn't.'



The memorial has become a treasured site for remembrance of Australia's participation in the Vietnam War. Men and women who were there, and others who were not, visit this site from around Australia and overseas to pay their respects and to try, in their own way, to make sense of events that now are three and four decades past.

The Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial had its beginnings in the wake of the 1987 Welcome Home Parade. A committee of veterans' associations and other interested parties was established to have a memorial constructed in the national capital, Canberra. A site on Anzac Parade, the avenue honouring the service of Australians in all conflicts and services, was allocated. From the beginning of 1988 until September 1991, the site was marked only by a small, wooden cross, painted white, with a noticeboard alongside, on which was painted: 'On this site will be erected a memorial for those who died & served in the Vietnam War'.

Even before construction started, people visited this site. Veterans came to see where their memorial would stand. Families of the dead sought out the place their loved ones would be commemorated – in addition to their names having been inscribed on the Australian War Memorial's Roll of Honour. Architects sought inspiration for the design competition, announced in 1989. A design was chosen. Workmen arrived. The first sod was turned on 6 September 1991. About 15,000 veterans gathered for the dedication of the memorial. Most were Australians; others had served in the New Zealand, American or South Vietnamese forces. Family members of the 512 Australian service personnel who lost their lives in the war attended as honoured guests. Some 15,000 spectators – family, friends, strangers – came to cheer the veterans, who marched and paraded before the memorial, remembering and honouring all those who served and died in the war.

The memorial's wall of words reflects the 'life journey' of veterans of this controversial and divisive war. The conflict itself and the following troubled years of peace are represented in the memorial – and thus within this booklet – with statements of anguish and confusion amid excerpts of action reports and histories. But as the dedication itself passed into history on 3 October 1992, with veterans attending reunions and celebratory events afterwards, a subtle change in mood and outlook could be detected.

Let this this Memorial be a memory of our Mates who are no longer with us.

Bill Taggart (1st/83rd) – couldn't resist a word from the past...

"Hi Paul, just read the latest *E&Es* and, as always, a very fine read. One thing that really caught my eye was the story on Luscombe Bowl. While I had the dubious pleasure of landing at Luscombe Field on a few occasions, I never knew of Luscombe Bowl, pretty neat what your guys did constructing that.

Not sure how many of your mates ever landed at Luscombe aboard one of your Caribou planes but it was the thrill of a lifetime. Since there did not seem to be much room (or safety) for having a proper glidepath, the planes would be flying along nicely and abruptly drop down to land often leaving your stomach still up in the air! After being a passenger the first time, and being an old vet, it was funny to watch the reaction of others who were landing there for the first time. Hard to describe accurately the expressions seen by those wondering what the \$%& was going on. I will say though that the Aussie pilots were top notch!

Thanks for resurrecting the memory.

Bill."

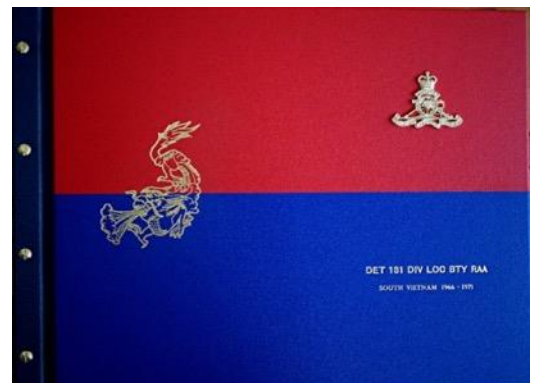
REMEMBRANCE DAY – 2023, Sydney lit up the Opera House...



...and Ed got to say a few words at the service he hosts in his home town



. **The “Detachment Album Project”** – This project is sponsored by the 131 Locators Association and is in need of some photographic and by-line input from our members/Readers.





Give me a Name?

The “Lost Locator Project”

This Project is being re-ignited for 2022.

Our current list contains the names of **116** Locators (as at 31.11.2023) that we have not had contact with since basically commencing communications in 2012, so, we thought this year is as good as any to try and reduce this number.

However, this doesn't mean that we still have contact with the total number of Battery/Detachment members we have Located over time as continuing correspondence has lapsed in a lot of cases.

We regularly check bereavement/funeral notices and this does not locate members in the way we really want to. So, we're appealing for YOUR help in scouring all sorts of sources – local RSL's may not a good starter.

I can send you the total list of names or, if you prefer, by years in SVN to give you a starting point. I will keep an update and publish monthly results in *Eyes & Ears* and the Associations Facebook page on the web site.

Ed got in touch with Detective Peter Meaney with regards to two members of the Detachment who are not located in this month's *Eyes & Ears* Birthday List – Brian John Hawkey and Michael William Ferris and the following are the findings by his ever reliable niece Claire (who is an absolute gem) -



131 Locators
“Cold Case Division”
The *Eyes & Ears* of the Force

Peter Meaney, Detective – followed up, as he does so well, with the following information extracted from Ryerson Index on a request on possible “Lost Locators” ...

“Hi Peter,

Michael William Ferris is buried in the Mount Gravatt Crematorium. He was cremated and then buried 27 Sep 2005. He died 21 Sep 2005 in Brisbane aged 59. <https://brisbane.discovereverafter.com/profile/31936353>

I think the Ryerson Index record for a **Brian Hawkey** (Paul discovered) is a different guy to **Brian John Hawkey**. Using the electoral rolls in Ancestry, there is a **Brian John Hawkey** living in Murwillumbah, NSW in 1972 occupation Cook, then in 1977 he is living in Brisbane with occupation listed as Army, same again in 1980.

There is a Brian Hawkey (no middle name) living in Maroubra West, NSW in 1977 and 1980, occupation foreman. So there are two of them and the latter is the one who died in 2018.

I think Brian John Hawkey is probably still alive. I found a probable son Mark Brian Hawkey who sadly died aged 19, born 1 June 1970 Liverpool NSW and died 6 Dec 1989 in Brisbane QLD. He is buried in Murwillumbah Lawn Cemetery <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/186135598/mark-brian-hawkey>.

There are quite a few Hawkeys but no Brian buried there. Mark is listed on a couple of private Ancestry family trees. If Brian were deceased then he would show up but people who are still alive do not come up on family trees. So he is possibly still alive in Queensland unless he moved back to NSW.

Regards,
Claire.”

Ed – as a continuation with regards to the above –

- a) **Michael William Ferris** – he is included in this month's Vale listings.
- b) **Brian John Hawkey** – there is a need for further scouring. Can anyone give us some help with a possible location to him? Discovering that he was listed as a “Cook” living in Murwillumbah in 1972, then in Brisbane in 1977 and 1980 and being in the Army is a definite possibility that he's ours. He is listed via the DVA Nominal Roll as serving with the Detachment in 1966-67 with the AAAC.

Thanks for another great effort Peter and Claire.

Paul Dickson

Get in touch with me via 131eyesandears@gmail.com

Unknown Dates of Deaths continues to be updated...as at 31.11.2023 -

A continuing Reflective Thought with regards to Vales as we progress on in years. The following table reflects Members passings over the years since our 'journeys' into South Vietnam which began back in May 1966.

It reflects on 10 year periods since, and including, 1966. The figures speak for themselves, and if you exclude deaths in SVN, of which there were two, the initial period does show a dark period considering the ages of our mates.

10 Year Detachment/131 Battery Death Periods

										<u>Total</u>
1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	
1	0	2	1	2	0	3	0	1	0	10
1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	
0	1	1	0	1	0	0	2	0	1	6
1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	
0	0	2	2	2	1	2	1	0	1	11
1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	
3	2	2	2	0	3	2	1	2	2	19
2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	
0	6	4	5	3	9	6	6	6	3	48
2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	
8	4	5	5	6	7	11	5	0	0	51
Unknowns*										3

Total 148

Please note that these figures represent data provided by Members, from what was, and is stated to be reliable sources (official notices/family/mates etc). Data as at **31.11.2023**.

*Unknowns – Sadly, we have only been advised of the Members' passings only. Here are the names and details –

Name	Rank	Regt No	Section	SVN	DoB	DoD
Lempa, Helmut	L/Bdr	38120	Radar	1966-67	18.10.46	Unknown
Robinson, Marcus Lee	Gnr	2791229		1970	14.02.48	Unknown
Robinson, Edward "Ted"	WO2	1411329	Radar	1968-69	11.08.49	Unknown

If you can help in any way to update this data it would be greatly appreciated – You can send information to Paul Dickson at email 131eyesandears@gmail.com Subject: Vale update

Ed - As a closing thought, can we give some thought to completing Locator Profiles, which do add a personal background and also keeping in touch as it keeps us up to date with you and mates.

However, as a continuation. This has been extended to cover more Unknown details... such as Rank, Regt No (not an easy discovery), Section, DoB and then day.month for DoD's.

Ok, detectives, here's more homework – 7 gaps to go!

Name	Rank	Regt No	Section	SVN	DoB	DoD
Douglas, Alan				N/a		00.00.09
Foley, Charles Anthony	WO2	212687	Survey	N/a		00.01.18
O'Keefe, Michael Francis	Gnr	2787168		1968-69	26.11.46	00.00.80
Todd, Geoffrey Thomas	Bdr	54254		1967-68	18.12.67	00.00.12
White, Robert Barnett	Sgt	311537	Radar	1966-67	08.12.37	00.00.92

Ed – It's interesting that some of the members listed above had some affiliation with the Battery, yet we have serious blanks with Alan Douglas, and Sections in the Battery not known for Michael O'Keefe and Geoffrey Todd?

AN INVESTIGATION 181 Days



. The Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal (RVCM)

This is just a continuing update with regards to the progress being made with the submissions on behalf of Defense Force Members, who for no reasons of their own, were not awarded The Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal (RVCM) –

Richard Barry responded to an email from me -

“Thank you Paul. I have been sent many copies of this nine-page letter over the past few days. This is what I am sending the affected men:

Many of you may have (or about to) receive a nine-page email from the Minister for Defence Personnel regarding the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal.

I won't go into it as it is self-explanatory. It's entirely up to you if you wish to respond to your personal letter. But it would be good if you do.

In the meantime I am constructing a response because there are certain glaring anomalies that have surfaced that require clarification. My very strong Canberra based advocate has already sent a very analytical response as will a Queensland Senator and barrister.

Over the past few months several of us have appealed against previous refusals to be awarded this medal and based on new evidence and fresh interpretations have been successful via Defence Honours & Appeals.”

Here are extracts from the letter from the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Defence Minister sent to **Allen Morley** on behalf of the Association –



THE HON MATT KEOGH MP
MINISTER FOR VETERANS' AFFAIRS
MINISTER FOR DEFENCE PERSONNEL

Parliament House Telephone: 02 6277 7820
CANBERRA ACT 2600 minister@dva.gov.au
Ngunnawal and Ngambri Country Ref No: MC22-002274

Mr Allen Morley
131awm@gmail.com

Dear Mr Morley,

REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM CAMPAIGN MEDAL

Thank you for your correspondence in relation to the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal (RVCM). I apologise for the delay in providing a response, however this has proved to be a complex matter requiring detailed consideration. Thank you for your patience while this matter was under consideration.

It has always been my position that any expansion of the award of the RVCM must be lawful.

That is to say, any decision expanding the scope of those eligible to receive the award must be made within the power of the Australian Government, and it must be legally defensible. Failure to do so would be no better than providing replicas, as they would not be properly awarded.

National servicemen are not the only cohort of personnel who did not receive the RVCM if they did not complete 181 days in Vietnam, or otherwise meet one of the other eligibility criteria. All soldiers, sailors and airmen deployed to Vietnam who did not meet the eligibility criteria are not eligible to receive the RVCM. Nevertheless, all of their service is acknowledged and appreciated by me and the Australian Government, we thank them all for their service. I also acknowledge the commitment and dedication of those that have raised these issues for consideration.

Eligibility Criteria

I understand that the campaign to have the RVCM awarded to Australian national servicemen who served in Vietnam for at least 60 days, but fewer than the required 181 days, and who left Vietnam due to their national service finishing (the Campaign) does not seek a change to the eligibility criteria for the RVCM, but rather seeks the medal to be awarded through another mechanism, principally through discretionary power said to be already provided to the Australian Government.

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It is important, however, to examine the eligibility criteria so that they are properly understood. I note here that these matters have also been considered by the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal (DHAAT) on at least three occasions⁶⁵ and by the Federal Court of Australia at least once.⁶⁶

The relevant eligibility criteria for the RVCM are found in a Directive of the Decoration Office of the Republic of Vietnam Department of National Defense, denoted HT. 655-430 (Directive, as amended and augmented) dated 1 September 1965. Article 1 of that document allowed Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) personnel to be eligible for the RVCM after 12 months' service.

The primary eligibility criteria for the RVCM for Australian and allied personnel are found in Article 3 of the Directive, which states:

Allied soldiers assigned to the Republic of Vietnam after 6 months in war time with missions to assist Vietnamese Government and the RVNAF to fight against armed enemies, are eligible for Campaign Medal decorations; they would be awarded with Campaign medal (sic) under conditions anticipated in Article 2 of this Directive.

Article 3 was subsequently amended on 22 March 1966 to read as follows:

Foreign Military personnel serving in South Vietnam for six months during wartime and those serving outside the geographic limits of South Vietnam and contributing direct combat support to the R.V.N.A.F. for six months in their struggle against an armed enemy will also be eligible for the award of the campaign medal.

Article 3 also allows for the RVCM to be awarded to allied soldiers who meet the conditions set out in Article 2 of the Directive, which permits the RVCM to be awarded in circumstances where combatants are wounded in action, captured and released or escaped, missing in action, or killed in action:

The RVNAF personnel, who don't possess the eligibilities prescribed in Art.1, but happen to be under one of the following circumstances, are qualified for Campaign Medal award:

- WIA (wounded in action)
- Captured in action by enemies or missing while performing his missions, but released later, or an escape has taken place.
- KIA or die while performing a mission entrusted.

The above anticipated cases must take place during the war.

⁶⁵ Report of the Inquiry into Eligibility for the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal DHAAT (2014); Report of the Inquiry into the feasibility of amending the eligibility criteria for the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal DHAAT (2015); McLeod-Dryden and the Department of Defence [2016] DHAAT 02.

⁶⁶ McLeod-Dryden v Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal [2016] FCA 1138.

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Article 2 was also amended on 22 March 1966 to read:

Military personnel who do not have the length of service required in Article 1 of this Directive but fall in one of the following conditions are also eligible for the award:

- Wounded by the enemy (military actions connected wound) (sic)
- Captured by the enemy during actions or in line of duty, but later rescued or released.
- Killed in action or in line of duty.

The conditions specified in this Article must have come to pass in war time.

The Directive therefore only permits the RVCM to be awarded to Australians under these circumstances, which is why I understand the Campaign is seeking to have the RVCM awarded through a different mechanism.

These eligibility criteria cannot be amended as they are the prerogative of the then Government of the former Republic of Vietnam, more commonly known as South Vietnam, which ceased to exist in 1975. The Australian Government does not have the legal authority to change the laws and regulations of foreign states, defunct or otherwise.

I note that the recent DHAAT decision of Lockrey and the Department of Defence [2022] DHAAT 10 (18 July 2022) found that the Australian Department of Defence had been wrongly interpreting Article 2, especially as it was amended such that they were applying extra qualifications beyond being "wounded by the enemy". Specifically, Defence was requiring wounded Australians to be classified as "battle casualties" according to Australian administrative rules and procedures, which was inconsistent with the Directive. I do not consider that the Lockrey decision sets a precedent for a relaxing of time-based eligibility criteria for the RVCM given that this decision does not actually amend any eligibility criteria or allow for any other expansion, it merely properly applies the wording of the Directive as amended. The time-based criteria are clear and unambiguous.

Arguments made for expanded scope I have considered in detail each of the arguments that have been raised in support of expanding the scope of eligibility of the RVCM and address those below.

"Discretion"

It has been suggested that the Australian Government has discretion in deciding who is allowed to receive the medal, and that such discretion should be used to expand the award of the RVCM in the manner advocated by the Campaign. The Campaign refers to a provision which exists in various documents. In the Directive, it can be found at Article 11 and is cast

as:

...Campaign Medal awarding recommendations for eligible allied soldiers will be formed by various friendly countries and submitted directly to JGS/RVNAF.

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In Article 3 of the Directive as amended on 22 March 1960, the relevant phrasing is:

...Foreign authorities will determine eligibility of their personnel for this award...In a memorandum numbered 183/TTM/QD/CDBT and dated 31 August 1966, Article 2 states:

Eligibility of individuals for the award will be determined by Royal Australian authorities and will be recorded in the personnel record of eligible personnel in accordance with procedures currently being applied by Royal Australian Forces. No action is required by RVNAF authorities other than that outlined in Article 4 of this order.

The Campaign asserts that these provisions alone or together operate to give the Australian Government discretion to unilaterally determine who is and is not eligible to receive the RVCM. **I do not agree.** A proper reading of these provisions is that they only act to allow the Australian Government to identify to the Republic of Vietnam Government or, after 31 August 1966, Defence Honours and Awards, who it is that has met the stipulated eligibility criteria which remain unchanged.

If the above provisions were to be read as giving the Australian Government the ability to award the medal outside of the eligibility criteria, then the eligibility criteria would be redundant and left with no work to do. Such a reading of the Directive and its amending documents cannot be sustained as a logical interpretation of the documents.

End-of-war waiver

Some members of the Campaign have sought to have the Australian Government expand award eligibility for the RVCM on the basis that the United States successfully asked the Republic of Vietnam Government to alter the eligibility criteria of the RVCM at the end of the Vietnam War such that personnel who were in Vietnam at the end of the war would receive the RVCM with a reduced period of service in Vietnam.

A memorandum of the Republic of Vietnam Government numbered 149 /TTM/1/PCTT/HCG and dated 23 February 1973, Article 1 stated:

To stimulate and enhance the morale of Free World Military Assistance Forces personnel who have served in Vietnam during the last phase (end) of the war, the JGS/RVNAF decides to grant a special waiver for the minimum time in service required for recommending and considering RVNAF awards which are granted to Allied personnel for meritorious service.

Article 2 of that memorandum stipulated that the 'Campaign Medal' would be subject to the waiver, and an annex attached to the memorandum indicated that the period would be 2 months. Article 7 of that memorandum backdated its effect to 28 January 1973.

The effect of this augmentation to the Directive is that if a soldier left Vietnam after 28 January 1973, that soldier would only need to have served in Vietnam for 60 days to be awarded the RVCM. These have been commonly referred to as the "end-of-war" provisions.

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It has been suggested that, given this reduction from 181 days to 60 days was permitted for United States soldiers, sailors and airmen, the Australian Government should similarly reduce the period of service required for national servicemen.

In my view, to do that would be to contravene the Directive. The precedent of the end-of-war provisions strengthens my view that the RVCM can only be awarded according to the terms as indicated in the Directive, or any of its amendments. The Republic of Vietnam did not reduce the eligibility period for any other circumstance. Further, this change was not done unilaterally by the United States, but rather they recognised this was a decision for the then Republic of Vietnam, requested such a change, and the change was made by the Republic of Vietnam.

For the Australian Government to make such a change itself now would be an arbitrary unilateral decision for an arbitrary period without any foundation in the source documents.

The reduction to 60 days is, therefore, irrelevant in all circumstances except those in the end-of-war provisions.

Some people have indicated to me that this waiver applies to United States soldiers, sailors and airmen, and that Australia should have a waiver of its own of the kind sought by the Campaign. As indicated above, to do so would be improper and not in accordance with the Directive. Further, the end-of-war provisions do not apply only to United States personnel, they apply to any allied personnel in Vietnam after 28 January 1973. The reason the waiver largely applies to United States personnel is that most other countries' soldiers, sailors and airmen were largely withdrawn before that date. In the case of Australia, the vast majority of our forces were withdrawn from Vietnam by 18 December 1972. Any Australians in Vietnam after 28 January 1973 who served in Vietnam for 60 days would be able to rely on the end-of-war waiver.

Equity and fairness

It has been argued that equity should intervene to cure a perceived unfairness in the way in which the RVCM is awarded. This argument has been articulated to me in two different ways, the first is to say that it is inherently unfair that because a national serviceman was forced to return to Australia by dint of their national service ending, they should be able to receive the RVCM because their service overseas ended through circumstances outside of their control. It is argued this circumstance has some parallels with the wounded or killed in action eligibility criteria contained in the Directive.

The second argument is that because it was foreseeable that there would be national servicemen put in a position where they would have to return to Australia before serving 181 days or otherwise have to continue their service, then the Australian Government should have approached the Government of the Republic of Vietnam to amend the eligibility criteria to allow the RVCM to be awarded in that circumstance, and in such circumstances is obliged to effect such a change itself now. Neither of these arguments are supportable.

In relation to the first, I do not consider it is inherently unfair that a person whose national service ended before reaching 181 days in Vietnam should not be awarded the RVCM.

Many national servicemen did serve the requisite 181 days, and did receive the medal. Conversely, many regular Army members who were not national servicemen served in Vietnam for less than 181 days and did not receive the medal.

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In terms of equity, it would be unfair to those who were awarded the medal on the basis that they served the requisite period in Vietnam to now arbitrarily allow people who served a lesser period to receive the medal.

A further issue is that, if the RVCM was to be awarded for a lesser period, for the reasons outlined there is no clear basis to determine what length of time spent in Vietnam should now be sufficient to be awarded the medal.

In relation to the second point, the simple fact of the matter is that **the Australian Government did not seek amendment or augmentation to the Directive that the Campaign** says should have been sought. I agree that the circumstances in which the Campaign would like to have the medal awarded were reasonably foreseeable, and I consider that reasonable foreseeableness an argument in favour of not awarding the medal in the manner the Campaign would like.

There are any number of circumstances that could have been, and probably were, reasonably foreseeable, and none of those were sought to be included in the Directive. Not for national servicemen, regular army, or any other group.

That the Campaign would like now to go back and change these circumstances is an impossibility and would amount to a change in the eligibility criteria which, as I have outlined above, is not possible.

Further, for equity to intervene, there needs to be an equitable cause of action that the Government or a Court could rely upon. I have not had any such cause of action articulated to me, and I have not been able to identify one myself. In essence, the Campaign's claim in equity is to implore me to do something which I am not legally able to do.

Members of philanthropic organisations It has been suggested that because members of philanthropic organisations were recipients of the RVCM, the award should be extended to more combat forces because it is unfair for some combat forces not to receive a medal when members of philanthropic organisations are entitled to receive the medal.

This argument fails to recognise an important aspect of Australian military history, the important contribution made by those who support our troops, and the historic way Australia deploys its forces. Australian personnel who served with philanthropic organisations accredited to the Army, who are on the Nominal Roll of Vietnam Veterans, and who served 181 days in Vietnam are entitled to the RVCM. These people were members of the Australian Red Cross Society, the Salvation Army, the Young Men's Christian Association, Campaigners for Christ, and the Australian Forces Overseas Fund. They wore Army uniforms, were attached to Australian Military Forces, and were contemporaneously allotted for special service under the former Repatriation (Special Overseas Service) Act 1962. I have seen disappointing public comments in relation to the RVCM being issued to 'non-combatant philanthropists'. This language is a disservice to those Australians who served with philanthropic organisations supporting Australian soldiers, sailors and airmen in the field.

The idea that a person had to be part of a combat force to receive a campaign medal (including an Australian campaign medal) is incorrect, especially given the March 1966 amendment to the Directive outlined above in which the Republic of Vietnam changed the eligibility for the RVCM for foreign personnel from "soldiers... to fight against armed enemies" to "foreign military personnel".

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An exception which excluded non-combat forces from RVCM eligibility must also then apply to members of transport and logistics corps, who I trust it would be agreed are deserving of recognition for serving 181 days in Vietnam.

There is a long-standing history of campaign medals being awarded to members of philanthropic organisations who support Australian soldiers, sailors and airmen provided they spend the requisite number of days in the relevant campaign. Australia has deployed accredited representatives of philanthropic organisations since the First World War, and continued to do so in the Second World War, Korean War, Malayan Emergency, Vietnam War, East Timor, Bougainville, Solomon Islands and the Middle East.

Award to Navy personnel

I am aware that in 1987 it was identified that the crew of four Australian ships were erroneously issued the RVCM between 1967 and 1972. Navy had incorrectly counted the total number of days the ships were allotted for duty as applying towards the 181 days required for RVCM eligibility, rather than the period of time spent in the operational area. This was done in error. An error is not precedence to enable a further error. I do not intend to deliberately make a similar mistake, as some would argue I should.

Duty

Campaign members have made the case to me that national servicemen did their duty just as well as their regular Army colleagues. I agree, and the Australian Government is grateful for that service. Indeed, some national servicemen did qualify for the RVCM. As you will also be aware, Australia issued its own campaign medals for the Vietnam War, being the Vietnam Medal and the Vietnam Logistic and Support Medal. Recipients of these medals also receive the Australian Active Service Medal 1945-1975 with Clasp 'VIETNAM'. These medals have shorter qualifying periods. The relevant criteria for each of these medals is primarily based on differing amounts of time spent in Vietnam.

Procedural fairness

I have seen correspondence that suggests the Campaign and the people it advocates for have been denied procedural fairness. In fact, the truth is the opposite. The Campaign has been afforded multiple reviews of this issue, including my own review. This issue has been considered by DHAAT multiple times with decisions denying the award of the medal on the basis of insufficient time served in Vietnam in 2014, 2015 and 2016 with the final of those decisions subject to a failed Federal Court appeal.

Support by Parliamentarians

I am aware that a number of Members of Parliament and Senators have written letters of support in favour of the RVCN being awarded in the manner the Campaign is seeking. I have reviewed each of those letters and emails, and I have spoken with my ministerial colleagues about them. It is one thing to support the Campaign in-principle, however for the reasons I am outlining in this letter, if something is not lawful then it cannot be done. I have spent a great deal of time considering each of the issues that have been raised in favour of the Campaign, my parliamentary colleagues have not necessarily had the same opportunity to do so.

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Awards by private organisations

I am aware of instances where certain organisations have presented replica RVCNs to members of the community. These are not genuine awards, and high quality replicas of most medals can be purchased from a range of manufacturers. This is an issue that does not just affect the RVCN, and I am aware of cases where people have purchased gallantry awards, and other medals, and either worn them themselves or presented them to other people. The appropriate wearing of any medals is governed by, in the case of Australian medals, the Letters Patent that create them and the Regulations that govern them and, in the case of foreign awards, the eligibility criteria of the nation that awards them and the addition of the award to the Schedule of Approved Countries and Awards by the Governor-General.

Comity

Australia was not the only country that sent forces to the Vietnam War. The United States sent some 2.7 million personnel, of whom approximately one third were conscripts, to serve in the Vietnam War. The rules the United States uses to determine eligibility for the RVCN are the same as the rules Australia follows. I do not intend to create a situation where the same medal is treated differently in two allied countries, or any other of the involved nations, such as New Zealand.

Gazetta

I have considered resolving this issue by gazetting the RVCN such that it can be issued as an Australian medal. This is not a suitable approach for three reasons.

The first is that it would in law be the establishment of a different medal. There would then be RVCNs issued under the rules contained in the Directive as South Vietnamese medals, and RVCNs issued as Australian medals with less stringent requirements. Creating two types of RVCN would mean that different people would have different medals that looked the same with different eligibility criteria. This would be similar to a hypothetical scenario in which the Imperial Victoria Cross, and Victoria Cross for Australia, were awarded for differing levels of gallantry – this cannot be the case.

Secondly, the Australian honours and awards system, as noted above, already has a number of medals recognising service in Vietnam.

Thirdly, Australia maintains close and friendly ties with the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. It would be diplomatically inappropriate for Australia to gazette a medal that was issued by the former Republic of Vietnam and to issue a new medal based on an emblem that represents a country that no longer exists.

Conclusion

I understand that the Campaign feels that there is an expectation the RVCN was going to be awarded in the manner they would like it to be. This is regrettable, and I am sure this correspondence will disappoint a number of people. I note a degree of this expectation was created by purported undertakings made prior to our Government's election that the issue would be further considered, but I note there was no guaranteed desired result from those considerations. I do not want to disappoint the Campaign and its supporters, however, I cannot do something that is unlawful, and I cannot do something that is outside of the power of the Australian Government. The fact of the matter is that expanding the award of the RVCN is simply not within the gift of the Australian Government.

9

This is an award that was created by a country that no longer exists, that Australia has no jurisdiction over, and that Australia never had jurisdiction over. The same is true for any country, defunct or otherwise.

I cannot act in a manner contrary to law, regardless of how unfair some may find it, or how much some want a specific thing to happen. Further, it would be inappropriate for the Government to create an Australian RVCN.

As such, I decline to make a decision in relation to the RVCN. I agree with the current, existing manner in which the RVCN is awarded and the recommendations of DHAAT in relation to this matter. As such, I do not consider any decision is necessary.

I appreciate I have taken a long time to consider each of the above points, and I thank you again for your patience while I have been considering the Campaign and the RVCN.

Yours sincerely,

HON MATT KEOGH MP

18 October 2023

Paul Dickson

"Nothing ventured, nothing gained."

Mail Call...

. Bill Taggart (1st/83rd) – “Thanks for the birthday wishes Paul.

I celebrated my birthday and Veterans Day with a trip to the ER on Thursday after tripping and falling face first into the street. I was sucking up leaves with a combination electric blower/vacuum and didn't realize that the cord was wrapped around my leg. I turned it off to say hello to a neighbour (ironically the same one who helped me when I fell in September) and tripped. He told me is done talking with me now!!

At the ER they did an X-Ray of my right wrist and Cat Scan of my head, neck and spine and all were all good but I look like the RCA dog with the circle around my eye. Our son is going to buy me a big roll of bubble-wrap! Never a dull moment.

I hope all is well with you.

Bill.”

. Terry Erbs - Reunion of Locators Det 131 68/69...

Thanks to **Graham William's** tremendous efforts, 31 Locators & wives had a very enjoyable lunch last Friday at Greenmount Surf Club.



Photo - Graham Williams & "Jessie" Owens

Those who attended were:-

Garry & Pam Lovell, Ian & Chris Brignall, Graham & Jenni Williams, Peter & Louise Bremner, Derek & Vicki Hinde, Terry & Lesley Erbs, Graeme & Joan Owen, Brian & Mary Smythe, T.C. & Nola White, Paul & Janice Angell, Herb & Gail Andrews, Peter & Pauline Creedon, Peter Bennett, John Stanford, Joe Losiak, John Chiltern, Grant Perrins & Peter Ravelje.



Graham also arranged the exclusive use of the Surf Club's function room and we also had great bar service from a lovely Scottish barmaid, and many thanks to Bert Jacka [who couldn't attend], Peter Bennett and Joe Losiak who generously picked up the "large" bar tab.



Photo - Joe Losiak, Derek Hinde, Peter Creedon and TC White

Although we're all aging and walking slower these days, it was a wonderful occasion to catchup with old mates and to reminisce about the past years over many cold ales.

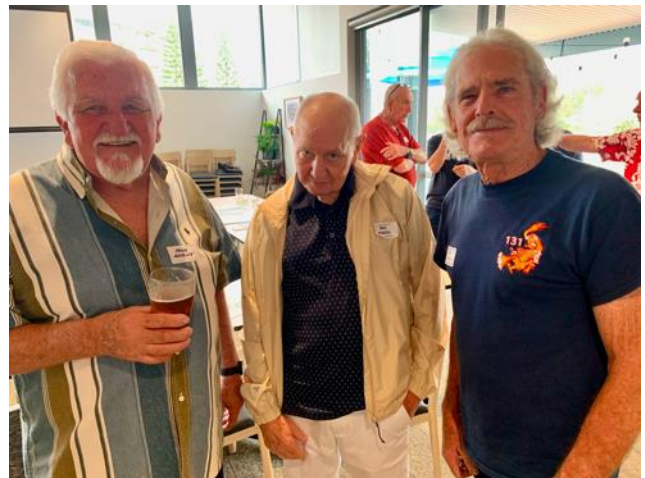


Photo - Peter Ravelje, Paul Angell and Gary Lovell

Some I recognized immediately, others I reconnected with such as Peter Bennett, who flew up from Melbourne. An ex CBA employee, Peter is preparing a list of CBA employees who served in Vietnam. "Mick" Pettiford, who was invited but couldn't make it, was added to Peter's CBA list – I shared a flat in Melbourne with "Mick" late '69 and I haven't seen him since, although he lives on the Sunshine Coast!

"Jessie" Owen brought along two magnificent photo albums and in one, there were photos of us young and fit at the Det, paired with more recent photos of us as older senior "citizens".



Photo- John Chiltern, Derek Hinde, Gary Lovell, Herb Andrews and Peter Bennett.

Jessie entertained all with his recounting of the 'relocated' beer keg and his, and several other unnamed locators', pilgrimage to the iconic Bathurst 1000 race before their deployment to Vietnam. Hopefully "Jessie's" story gets published in "Eyes & Ears".

Photo - Peter Ravelje, Peter Bremner, Peter Bennett and Peter Creedon

What I particularly enjoyed were the many conversations, where you discover what mates did following their N/S service, of their long successful careers and now their adult kids are leading similar lives. Two were particularly coincidentally, Peter Ravelje's son, is a Qantas pilot flying the "Dreamliner" B787 and my neighbour's son is also with the same company and flying the same aircraft. Also Grant Perrin's son, an Army helicopter pilot, who I probably met when working at the Army's Aviation school at Oakey [all the pilots looked the same in flight gear !]



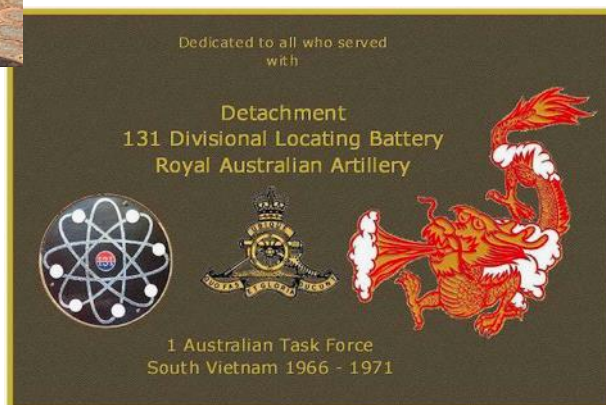
Photo - Grant Perrins & Peter Bremner

Some of us stayed on the extra day and attended the Remembrance Day Service by Tweed Head and Coolangatta RSL in Chris Cunningham Park.



Afterwards we adjourned to the local pub for post service drinks, not the RSL! Graham has complained to Sub Branch re the stopping of the traditional reading of the Ode in Twin Towns Club. [I don't know of any other RSL club that has stopped reading the Ode!]

Given aging and growing health issues, I wasn't surprised when the proposed reunion for 100yr Commemoration of Locating in Brisbane 2025 was mentioned, that few would commit but I'm hoping some will be there for our next "catchup".



Ed – A great memorable effort Graham.

. **John Lochore** – “Hello Paul,

We had a gathering of 131 chaps in Perth on Friday 24th November, admirably organised by Barry Guzder.

A number of pictures were taken, included in this email and some following ones. We'll leave it to you to select which one(s) you like best.

I hope you're better at editing/cropping than I am.

John



Joe Librizzi, John Lochore, Alan Robb, Neville David, Peter Hopper, Barry Guzder, Chris Chapple, Ross Gunnell



John Lochore, Chris Chapple, Barry Guzder, Ross Gunnell, Neville Davis, Peter Hopper, Alan Robb

Neville Davis, Peter Hopper, Ross Gunnell, Alan Robb, Joe Librizzi, Chris Chapple, John Lochore, Barry Guzder

Ed - Looks as though it was a great “catch-up” – well done Barry G.



Mail Out



I started this in September, 2017 and have decided to continue running down the alphabet of names and sending some emails to blokes in general to say g'day and just to generally keep in touch. A lot of the blokes I've never met, so it's just to keep some connection alive. Plus, it's good to keep in touch, even sporadically, it may help to avoid any unpleasant unforeseen surprises.



Mail In - Here are the responses...

. **John Vitkovsky** – “G'day Dicko, Recent trip away with the South Coast Veterans Assoc. where about 50 of us booked out the Quorn caravan park for about a week. A group of Vets have learned how to play the guitar, so entertained at nights with playing and singing. A lot of fun and good tucker. Combined visit to Hawker and attended Jeff Morgan Gallery (look it up on the Web - Jeff is hugely talented and the artistic display is fantastic). Annual Quorn Show was on the Sunday, which we attended and then headed off to Peterborough for a couple of days. Visited the motorbike museum and Naomi caught up with the girls in the historical society. Just joined the Goolwa Pistol and Shooting Club. Shot competitive pistol for a number of years and hoping I am not too shaky to have another go at it...Other than that, life is good at Victor Harbor. Expecting my fully restored Vincent motorbike to arrive in Port Adelaide from the UK in a couple of weeks. Not for riding - too old to fall off. See pics. 1. Kanyaka Ruins, 2. Wire soldier, Hawker. 3. Light Show, Quorn. 4. My Vincent motorbike. All the best, John V.”



1. Left - Kanyaka Ruins

The Kanyaka Station ruins consist of two main historical sites. The first is the woolshed which was one of the largest in the state and provided room for 24 blade shearers who shored thousands of sheep in fairly confined shearing floors. The main building is the homestead which housed the manager, his family and servants. Some of the original stone wall which protected the gardens is still visible. The Great Northern Railway also ran parallel to Kanyaka Station; the raised roadbed of the old narrow gauge railway can still be seen today.

Kanyaka Station was a cattle and sheep station in the Flinders Ranges of South Australia located at Kanyaka, approximately 40

km north-north-east of Quorn, South Australia. along Hawker-Stirling North Road



2. Left and below - Light Show, Quorn. Quorn Silo Light Show projects every night from sunset and the show in two parts, lasts over three hours.



3. Right - Wire soldier, Hawker. Hawker is a town and a locality in the Flinders Ranges area of South Australia, 365 kilometres north of Adelaide.



4. Below - My Vincent motorbike



Ed – looks and sounds like an interesting get-away. Anyone else been out and about?

. Rieny Nieuwenhof – “Hello Paul,

I followed your travels on FB. It was obviously a memorable and enjoyable experience. I was in Turkiye myself a few years back and visited similar sites as you did. It is such a diverse country with lots of evidence of the former Roman and Byzantine empires. How impressive is the Blue mosque? I also loved the food in Turkiye.

I also had the opportunity to study in Israel and saw first-hand the tension between the Palestinians and Israelis. What is happening there is tragic, but not unexpected.

I am writing this note while on duty at the Vietnam Veterans Centre. Our Geelong Vietnam Veterans Association continues to exist and is actively involved in veteran welfare. We have a fortnightly lunch, participate in Veterans' Health

Week by providing a variety of activities for members and friends, have excursions/trips away and other social activities, including golf.

So that keeps our Committee pretty busy.

Each month we have our Committee meeting here at the VV Centre. We run four memorial services each year – ANZAC Day, Coral/Balmoral, Long Tan Day (Vietnam Veterans Day) and Remembrance Day – all of these need planning and a budget.

We also try to have our representatives participate in other memorial services within our region by laying wreaths. This week some of our members have been selling poppies in the lead up to Remembrance Day.

I might say that the various ESOs in Geelong are quite active, and there are quite a few – Geelong RSL and other local RSLs, the National Servicemen's Association (Nashos), Legacy, TPI Association, Naval Association, Soldier On – to name a few.

As you may know the Geelong Vietnam Vets also have their own Memorial and Vietnam Veterans Avenue of Honour to look after (we believe the only Vietnam avenue in this State), so that is an added responsibility. Personally, I keep active with regular gym sessions and I also have a dietician helping me eat the right foods. Veterans in Australia are pretty much looked after, although for younger veterans accessing their entitlements is not made easy by the Department of Veterans Affairs. We continue to be guided by our motto " Honour the dead, but fight like hell for the living".

Rieny Nieuwenhof OAM."

Ed – Curiosity got the better of me, as I was unaware of the following, so I went for a bit of a Google wander...

Geelong & District Vietnam Veterans` Avenue of Honour -

The Avenue of Honour was unveiled in 1995 to commemorate those who served in the Vietnam War. The Avenue is marked by a polished granite memorial.

Funding was received in March 2019 through the Saluting Their Service Program to upgrade the Vietnam Veterans Avenue of Honour and Memorial Park in North Geelong, Victoria.

Australia's military involvement in the Vietnam War began with the arrival of the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam (AATTV) in South Vietnam during July and August 1962. Australia's participation in the war was formally declared at an end when the Governor-General issued a proclamation on 11 January 1973. However, the end-date of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War has officially been amended to 29 April 1975 to reflect Australia's further involvement in the war during the fall of Saigon in 1975. The Department of Veterans Affairs and the Australian War Memorial, in Canberra now recognise this new date.



Address: Swinburne Street & Princes Highway, North Geelong, 3220

. Graham Williams – "Giddy Paul,

Am flat strap here now trying to finalize tour of duty number 28 back to Vietnam in a few days, so this will be short and sweet.

I expect by now you may have received articles and photos from the class of '69 reunion last Friday with the last of the stragglers heading off today. It has been a big few days really and good to catch up with so many people who were, and always will be part of your life. Hope the lads sent in some photos.

I have thrown in several pics you may wish to include in one of your editions. The bar girls in Vung Tau never looked like this in 1969, Then again maybe I drank too much on R&C to really notice. These from a bar in HCM several years ago during Xmas celebrations.

Was pleased to see you thoroughly enjoyed your most recent trip. They are indeed amazing parts of the world so where to next for you? I seem to get that question a lot myself these days.

Oh, before I forget I believe Gary Lovell sent you an article to publish? Will we be seeing that anytime soon?

Sorry mate but that's all from me at this time...miles to go and promises to keep as they say.

As always best wishes to you both, stay safe.

Graham Williams."

. John Richmond – "Hi Paul,

Unlike u I haven't been travelling anywhere in the recent past. As I told some one at a meeting I don't think I have been any further than 10 km from home in the last few months.

Our weather is still late spring. The mornings have been around 8 to 12. But we are really starting to show the lack of rain.

Only now and a bit over the silly season starts to get into full swing.

Just getting back into my memory bank. I still remember the Xmas day in 1966. We spent it in camp on call for firefighting. I hate to think what would have happened if it did happen. I was sitting with a couple of non-drinkers and was able to get extra free bees.

All the best
JR."

. Iain Kennedy – “Paul,

We are back from Khao Lak, Thailand, Penang, Malaysia and Singapore. It was mainly to catch up with my wife's aunts whom are not as well as before Covid and this is the first time to visit them since 2018.



Khao Lak is a beautiful part of the world, just north of Phuket. We stayed at Moracea by Khao Lak, this was our third time and it doesn't disappoint. Never had any time to enjoy the beach, or the pools as our Thai cousins took us out every day for lunch and visits. (include some photos.

Penang is where another auntie lives and more cousins, we stayed at the cousins business hotel in Georgetown, with water views and hawker markets all around we were in Malaysian hawker food heaven..



keep distance and masks on.



Then onto Singapore, lived there once during my youth, but don't recognise it any more. And so expensive now. Won't be rushing back there, that's for sure.

Now I'm back crook as a dog for three weeks. First with stomach upset, think it was ice in my drink. Then sore throat and crook hip, that's just how it is now a days.



Good news is i received my palm unit citation, only 55yrs in the making. That's it from me for now, enjoy the photos."

. Ken Osborne – “Dear Paul, hasn't been the best for me over the last couple of months as once again the wife is in hospital. She was home for a short while but when she couldn't get out of her arm chair and I was unable to get her up, she asked me to ring the ambulance and as a consequence she was readmitted to hospital where she has been ever since. The occupational therapist has recommended permanent residential care for her so it is unlikely that she will come home, so now the task of getting her into suitable surroundings where she can get the care she needs is pretty daunting and you just don't realise how much information you have to absorb and the pitfalls of trying to get answers from the bureaucracy (if you can) with all the laws regarding privacy and other matters. Even with power of attorney for both medical and financial matters, they still erect barriers to stop you accessing things, so it is very frustrating, time consuming and a general pain in the neck. But with constantly asking questions and more I think my daughter and I are starting to get some sense to things.

With regards to myself I haven't been having a good time either, gave my car up a year ago as my reaction times were slowing down and I was having problems walking. Have had been using a walker to get around or furniture surfed. I had asked for a wheelchair months ago and one finally turned up yesterday, now I have to learn how to use it and the ramp I asked for just over a year ago is expected to be installed at the end of this month or early In December, so then I will not have to try and negotiate steps to get on the lawn where I can get into a taxi or into a friend's car.

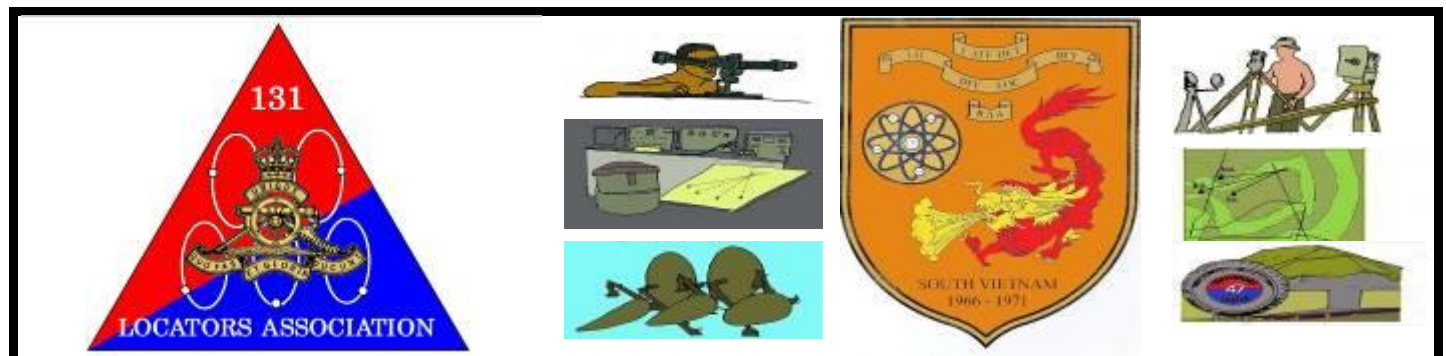
Never ends, so don't get old as it is a real bummer.

Mentally I am all right, but it is distressing to see the wife deteriorate and the feeling of helplessness you get by not being able to do the things to help her that were not a problem some years back. It is also annoying when I cannot do things for myself that also were not a problem that long ago.

So enough about my problems, I can still read, do my mental things, use the internet, do some research now and then and enjoy the weather when it is ok, can still feed myself and think I am not as badly off as other people in the world are , so not all things are bad and I still have family and friends around, so thankful for small blessings, so keep well yourself enjoy the coming winter season while we head into a forecasted hot summer,

Regards Ken

Ps. I envied your trip to Greece and middle east nice places to visit but in today's circumstances not the ideal place to live?”



Committee members:
President – Allen Morley, Vice President – Bert Blink, Treasurer/Secretary – Grahame Dignam,
Webmaster – Bob Billiards, Research Officer – Ernie Newbold, Designs and Development Officer – Nick Proskurin,
Eyes & Ears Editor – Paul Dickson
General members – Ian Amos, Ged Carroll, George Lane.
Regional Representatives: ACT – Bert Blink, Qld – Terry Erbs, SA - Geoff Blackwell,
Vic – Alan Adams, Vic Nth – Ron Mason, WA - Barry Guzder
<http://www.131locators.org.au>

Presidential perambulations:

It was now time. As the years added up our house and surrounds had just got too much to manage. We'd been here since 1977 so it was really time to move to a smaller house/apartment/ townhouse. But what a variety of essential tasks that set.

My man cave contained tools, electrical equipment, hardware of all sorts plus bits and pieces that I had kept 'just in case'. An early discovery was that no one wanted most of the accumulated bits and pieces. A friend was keen to have the large angle grinder and the battery powered chain saw.

The house needed painting both internal and external. That's when it became obvious that for a selling proposition it would be a case for furniture as either donations to charities, or leaving items on the roadside for someone to pick up, or passing on to family, or lastly disposal. Gradually the house emptied and looked very bare.

I realise that many readers have moved house over the years. But, with 46 years of occupation ours was a real downsize challenge. When we talked about it at our recent Committee meeting Ged Carroll told us he'd been in his house since 1970, which certainly scooped us. Ged said he didn't even want to think about moving from his house.

So, with Christmas not far away there are still jobs to be done. The water pressure cleaner will get a workout as will the circular saw and the leaf blower. We live on a steep block of land so care is needed in all the external cleaning up. Eucalyptus leaves are the biggest problem.

In January we go on the market hoping to catch the early 2024 house buyers. The general expectation seems to be that house prices in Sydney will continue to rise and we hope to be part of that trend. Obviously, the ROI on the selling price versus the buying cost will be significant. However, so will the value of new accommodation.

Cheers

Allen



<https://www.facebook.com/groups/131divlocbtyraa>

Minutes for the Annual General Meeting of the 131 Locators Association Inc. Date: Tuesday, 14th November, 2023 at 1105hrs...

. **Pertinent Points** – extracted from the 131 Locators Association Committee meeting...

Personal attendees were: Allen Morley, Grahame Dignam, Ged Carroll, Merv Nairn, Nick Proskurin, Ernest Newbold, Bob Billiards, Gordon Malcolm, Victor Danko and Ian Amos



Zoomed members were: Paul Dickson, Ron Mason, Terry Erbs, Ian Campbell, Reiny Nieuwenhof, Bert Blink and Barry Guzder



Apologies were received from. Kevin Browning, Steve Wynn, George Lane, other State Reps and Jim Fitzgerald.

Presidents Report:

131 Locators Association Inc

President's Report for FY 2022 – 2023:

This represents the President's Report for the financial year 2021-2023, a year of post-covid consolidation. This period represents our fourteenth full-year of operation and shows a stable, nonetheless positive trend in most aspects of the Association's activities.

The Association continues to be financially viable and sustainable for the foreseeable future as the financial report illustrates. Nevertheless, the continuing rapid ageing of our members continues to be, without doubt, the major factor for limitations on what the association can achieve. Many of the early Nashos have celebrated their 78th birthdays and others will do so within a year or two. Our former Regular soldiers are of very various ages. Contact with those who served in the Detachment and those who served at Holsworthy remains incomplete, although there has been significant success with new contacts in the past year.

Although it did not produce any known direct health issues amongst members, in 2021 and 2022 the corona virus changed the structure of our meeting program, with a mix of Zoom and physical attendance. We have sought to focus upon inclusivity with zoom as a viable alternative communication medium. We did experience some missed zoom opportunities in the reporting period.

The Association website, www.131locators.org.au continues to provide both a web presence and a defined identity. During the reporting period external access to the website has plateaued. However, through establishing a Facebook presence, the size of the Facebook group has showed pleasing growth.

Bob Billiards has continued as our Webmaster/Facebook master, providing an essential role in doing so, and has been ably supported by Bert Blink. Thank you Bob and Bert.

The website statistics and inputs into Facebook demonstrate the ongoing interest in our activities, albeit at a reduced level. As previously mentioned in my 2021-2022 Annual Report Facebook has directly resulted in some of our unlocated locators being located. Bob, your effort in setting up these ecommunication mechanisms is much appreciated.

Eyes and Ears, under the editorial overview of Paul Dickson, appears monthly, and regularly delivers editions of 18-25 pages. I believe that together the size and frequency are major measures of our Association's success. Members' contributions illustrate that we are recording more of relevance from our military past for both history and information. The June 2023 edition was the 179th in the new series, post the 1960s editions.

Only a limited number of activities, meetings, reunions and events were possible in the latter part of the year's program. Highlights for 2021-2022 were:

- . A further twelve editions of *Eyes and Ears*; extremely well-done Dicko and your enthusiasm is infectious. A sincere thanks to all of our contributors for stories, photos and some history, without which we would have a very thin monthly newsletter, as other associations have demonstrated over time
- . Despite having found several new members, this few unfortunately demonstrates that we are just maintaining membership levels or even have a declining membership base.
- . Anzac Day 2023 saw the annual march take place, but the march saw only a handful of Sydney members of the Battery attending.
- . A special mention for those Committee members who made things happen for the Association. Bert Blink continued in the role of Vice-President and is generous of his time and digital skills. Bert has subsequently been a regular attendee at the new format meetings
- . Grahame Dignam, Treasurer/Secretary remains the tie in for the Association's financial arrangements, records and operation of the membership database.
- . The Public Officer responsibilities by Gordon Malcolm saw our regulatory responsibilities complied with.
- . Ernie Newbold, Nick Proskurin, Ian Amos, Merv Nairn and Ged Carroll are all acknowledged for their ongoing involvement and support.
- . Our regional representatives provided local overview and contributed to our planning program. I thank Bert Blink (ACT and doubling up as Vice-President), Al Adams (Vic), Geoff Blackwell (SA), Barry Guzder (WA), Stuart Sporn (NT), Terry Erbs (QLD) and forward scouts in rural Victoria, Ron Mason and Rieny Nieuwenhof, for their collective contribution.
- . A note of appreciation to our Secretary/Treasurer for again keeping us on the financial straight and narrow.
- . Sadly the names of more of our number have now been etched onto the Association Honour Roll. Lest we forget them.

Allen Morley
October 2023

The Election of office-bearers for the 2023-24 year.

Allen Morley declared all positions vacant and election proceeded.

The Chair was handed to **Gordon Malcolm Public Officer** during this portion of the meeting.

Nominations for the positions of President (Allen Morley), Vice President (Bert Blink), Public Officer Gordon Malcolm and Secretary/Treasurer (G Dignam) were received and as all were prepared to stand again and were unopposed were duly elected for the new term.

The committee namely Ged Carroll, Ian Amos, Bob Billiards, Merv Nairn, Ern Newbold and Nick Proskurin also elected to stand again as a group.

As no new nominations were received and the group being unopposed, they were duly elected for the new term.

The chair of the meeting was passed back to the new President- elect Allen Morley for the balance of the meeting.

The regional Representatives who were appointed and are not elected and so continue in their roles.

President-elect Allen Morley expressed his appreciation to **Paul Dickson** especially, for his continued efforts in publishing the *Eyes & Ears* regularly.

Mr. Morley also expressed his appreciation to **Bert Blink** and **Bob Billiards** for their commitment as Vice President and Website administrator and for all the committee who actively assisted during the busy year.

Appointment of Auditor.

As the Association rules that we meet governing Tier 2 Associations do not require a formal audit just presentation of Receipts and Payments and Income expenditure reports scrutinized by the committee no auditor was formally appointed.

Jim Fitzgerald has indicated that he would be available to act as Auditor for the Association if any matter arose.

Statement of the Association to the Dept of Fair Trading. Completion of the report for the Dept of Fair Trading under section 49 of the Act was tabled regarding the operating results of the association and our ability to continue operations as required by our Constitution was tabled. Payment of costs as required by Fair Trading was proposed and approved.

The Annual General Meeting closed at 11.15 AM AEST

...A continuation on from the Annual General Meeting –

Minutes for the General Meeting of the 131 Locators Association Inc.

Attendees both in Person, ZOOM and Absent remained the same as above for the AGM.

Financial Membership:

Financial Membership is currently... **126** plus Associates **2** plus Affiliates **16** Total **144**

Plus Lapsed as at 1/11/2023 **33** members

Presidents report.

Allen referenced.

. Received a report which stated there would be no change to the conditions of the RCVM from the Minister Mr Keogh as the original conditions of the award has not changed

. Xmas function for the LSTAA on Sunday 17 th December at Padania Diggers Club, Childes St Panania NSW commencing 11.45AM RSVP Joe on 0407741473.

Public Officer Report.

Gordon has no issues to report. He will lodge the Report and payment to Fair Trading in due course.

Webmaster Update.

. Bob advised Facebook members are reducing slightly and the Newsletter had been the main feature. Bob explained the details of the stats on Facebook.

. Google stats are more relevant for the website activity.

Health Report:

. **Merv Nairn** reported that he is waiting for new hearing aids upgrading from the originals prescribed by DVA.

. **George Lane** advised **Merv Nairn** that **Spike Chase** who has Parkinson's has had a fall and his speech is also now failing him.

. **Bert Blink** is having a check-up on Thursday for Prostate

General Business and around the grounds:

Discussions ensued on the following -

Survey Website - a plan was agreed that the website will be backed up and migrated to the same ISP we use to ensure ongoing access.

We need to:

1. Backup the website that **Bert** has access to and ensure it is fully functioning.
2. Arrange for it to be hosted by the same ISP group we currently use then have it migrated.
3. Update the information as required ready for any new information to be added.
4. ensure that **John "Kanga" McFadden** and **Peter Hopper** have as much access/control to the new website as they want.
5. All costs to be borne by our Association. At this stage there is no time frame set but the main people engaged in the work will be Webmaster **Bob Billiards** and VP **Bert Blink**.

On other matters:

. **Terry Erbs** advised that the "**Graham Williams**" 131 Reunion at Greenmount was a great chance to catch up and chew the fat. The Group also attended the Remembrance Day at Twin Towers RSL.

. **The Republic of Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm** unit Citation award is for INDIVIDUALS in the unit or detachment. The display of the award is to be determined.

. **Gordon** advised details of an outing combined with a future Meeting. The venue is the "The Riverboat Postman" on the Hawksbury River. The departure time is 10.00Am returning at 1.10PM with our meeting to follow after lunch. The meeting agreed that we proceed with the project probably Feb/Mar2024.

If you've got more photos that you want added, just send them to: - Paul Dickson – web Photos

131eyesandears@gmail.com– BUT DON'T FORGET TO ADD TITLES/NAMES ETC.

. Upcoming Events Calendar –

131 Locators Association Committee Meeting

Date: Tuesday, 12th December, 2023 at 1100hrs

Venue: to be advised

Also, available via Zoom link to be advised



. Birthdays in the Battery...December –

DATE	NAME	REGT NO	SVN In	SVN Out	Comments
1	DAVID DOUGHERTY	2786594	17 01 1968	04 02 1969	
1	KEVEN BUSH	3792069	18 02 1968	21 02 1969	
1	NEVILLE SMITH	1734352	01 07 1969	25 03 1970	
3	RAYMOND MINNS	4410744	20 05 1966	28 02 1967	† 24.05.1997
3	CLIVE DREIS	2785766	05 02 1968	03 12 1968	

6	ALAN ROBB	5715343	29 01 1968	21 01 1969	
7	ANTHONY O'MARA	38334	15 03 1968	18 03 1969	RAEME † 01.01.1985
7	TERRY WESTERWAY	215818	04 05 1966	07 05 1967	
8	ROBERT WHITE	311537	22 04 1966	16 05 1967	† 1992
9	ANDREW OPIE 2Lt.	43611	04 05 1966	06 01 1967	† 14.07.2022
10	HANS WEBER	3789591	04 05 1967	02 04 1968	† 12.07.2016
12	MICHAEL DAVIS	4720736	20 01 1970	30 01 1971	
12	CHRISTOPHER BRAZIER	2792185	24 02 1970	25 02 1971	
13	JOHN STANFORD	217765	29 01 1969	21 01 1970	
13	LAURENCE D'ARCY	215649	04 03 1968	04 02 1969	12 Fd Regt.
13	" "	215649	20 05 1971	05 08 1971	131
14	PETER FLETCHER	2783429	04 05 1967	12 12 1967	
14	CHRISTOPHER SELF	66981	1969	1970	† UNKNOWN
14	THOMAS KING	1411018	12 12 1966	12 12 1967	† 25.04.2011
15	GEOFFREY PRICE	5715931	08 05 1969	25 02 1970	
16	PHILLIP PERRIN Capt.	53105	29 01 1968	21 01 1969	
17	TONY GOLDSMITH	1732029	04 05 1967	12 12 1967	
18	JIM HOGNO	2783680	03 01 1967	27 09 1967	
18	TOM CHECKLEY	311534	22 04 1966	05 08 1966	† 05.08.66 KBA
19	GEOFF BLACKWELL	4718307	20 06 1967	21 05 1968	
19	PETER GAULT	2783644	04 05 1967	27 09 1967	† 24.05.2014
19	ALLAN BENSLEY	243104	04.06.68	18.06.1969	† 20.12.2011
	" "		20.01.70	30.01.71	
19	RODNEY BEASLEY	3797746	04 03 1971	05 08 1971	
19	MICHAEL FERRIS	1733794	23 12 1968	28 03 1969	† 21.09.2005
	" "		30 03 1969	03 12 1969	131-RAEME
21	ROBERT WILLEM RETROT	1731922	05 05 1967	30 01 1968	† 27.03.2023
21	MICHAEL BOYLE Lt.	217004	17 02 1970	11 02 1971	
21	BLAIR SHEPPARD	1735563	01 04 1970	04 03 1971	
22	JOHN McGREGOR	3787376	20 05 1966	30 04 1967	
22	MICHAEL BURGESS Capt.	242895	24 03 1968	26 03 1969	RAEME
22	PETER MEANEY	4719804	03 06 1969	25 03 1970	
22	RONALD RYAN	2793176	20 08 1970	09 06 1971	
24	RON EVANS	3789614	04 05 1967	20 02 1968	
25	STEWART McALPINE	2787471	08 07 1968	04 06 1969	
25	ROBERT HOLDSWORTH	3793058	04 01 1969	03 12 1969	AACC
25	PETER BREMNER	1734544	16 04 1969	16 04 1970	
26	CHRIS BOULLY	4717884	17 04 1967	12 12 1967	
26	DAVID BILLINGS	2793071	19 08 1970	05 05 1971	4 Fd Regt.
28	GEOF. MACAULAY WO2	35753	27 11 1969	05 11 1970	† 27.04.2013
28	LIONEL OUTEN	1732195	05 05 1967	30 01 1968	
28	JOHN MARTIN Lt.	43613	25 02 1968	21 02 1969	
29	BRIAN JOHN HAWKEY	1200572	20 05 1966	29 04 1967	† 23.03.2018 AAAC
29	FRED LENNON Sgt.	29712	20 05 1966	11 12 1966	† 25.07.2013

*Above colour background coding explanation – Red – financial Locator, Yellow – located Locator, Black – passed Locator, Blue – honorary Member, White – NOT Located Locator.

Ed – 7 blokes not highlighted still have to be found! Ok, let's get into it and actively get out there locating a few more!

. Locator Profiles – we've received **175** and we've sent out **175**. Ed – Maybe we need to draw in a deep one so as to hold our breathes for a while longer.

. Located...

Have a look at the Association's web site - <http://www.131locators.org.au> – you might find some lost mates or get in touch with us and see if we can for you.

Vale

. Ian “Scotty” McNicol advised us of Barry’s possible passing and it has been confirmed.

	Name: Uren, Barry Thomas	
	Service No: 214715 Rank: Sergeant	
	SVN In: 29 10 1966 SVN Out: 01 05 1967	
	DoB: 10 11 1946 DoD: 24 10 2023	
	Lest We Forget	

“Scotty” continues... “When I returned from SVN in September 1968, I was assigned to 131 Btys transport compound, where Barry Uren was the Sergeant in charge. Every time we were warned of a CO's inspection, Barry would request troops from other sections of 131 Bty to spend a day washing, and painting all the Landrovers in olive drab paint. The inspection always ended with high praise from the CO, much to the chagrin of the other regimental Battery Sergeants.

One time Barry & myself had travelled for an overnight trip to the Richmond Air Force Base. There was a strip show on at the sergeants mess that night, so Barry lent me one of his shirts so I could attend. It was rather amusing having 2 sergeants & a WO2 that knew me, congratulate me on my promotion to sergeant.”

Stuart Sporn – “Sorry to hear that but condolences to his wife and family.”

Bill Taggart (1st/83rd Artillery) – “Sending the condolences of the men of the 1/83rd to Barry’s family, Lest We Forget.
Bill.”

David Doyle – “Barry was posted to Bty as a driver Paddy Gowans was BC Bruno Snedden BSM Paddy was the owner of 3.8 Jaguar Sports lovely machine Paddy was not a good driver got many scratches on his said vehicle Bruno suggested to Barry he should be Paddy’s driver Barry accepted not only did he drive his Jaguar but also his staff car and got promoted to lance Bdr for his trouble result was no more minor dings or paint scratches Barry loved the job and became a protected species whilst Paddy was BC my recollection of Young Barry Uren RIP cobber. DD.”

Vale

. **Peter Meaney** – through diligence and with the help of Claire (his niece) supplied the following information following up on a request on a possible “Lost Locator” ...

“Hi Peter,

Michael William Ferris is buried in the Mount Gravatt Crematorium. He was cremated and then buried 27 Sep 2005. He died 21 Sep 2005 in Brisbane aged 59. <https://brisbane.discovereverafter.com/profile/31936353>
Claire.”

	Name: Ferris, Michael William	
	Service No: 1733794 Rank: Corporal	
	RAEME	
	SVN In: 23 12 1968 SVN Out: 03 12 1969	
	Det 131 29 03 1969 03 12 1969	
	DoB: 19 12 1945 DoD: 21 09 2005	
	Lest We Forget	



131 Locators Association is always on the lookout for new financial members. With the establishment of the web site we continue to be burdened with the ongoing cost of maintenance etc and we need to be able to support this effort equally.

So, if you're a non-financial Associate receiving emails and the *Eyes & Ears* regularly you could bite the bullet and email Grahame Dignam:sectreas131locators@gmail.com and he could forward you the relevant forms to join - Memberships are available for 1 year or longer deposit a DONATION direct (add your name) to the associations account at "A/c Name: 131 Locators Association Inc. Bank: Westpac, Kingsgrove NSW BSB No: 032 166 A/c No: 264133"

Hope we hear from you?

Website: <http://www.131locators.org.au>

. Other related sites...

. Locating, Surveillance & Target Acquisition Association...



LOCATING, SURVEILLANCE & TARGET ACQUISITION ASSOCIATION

The Eyes and Ears of The Battlefield



Australian Artillery Association – www.australianartilleryassociation.com



ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ARTILLERY HISTORICAL COMPANY

www.artilleryhistory.org



Website link - <http://www.vvaa.org.au/>

Website link - <http://www.dva.gov.au/Pages/home.aspx>

. VETERAN'S AFFAIRS WEBSITE

The Dept of Veteran's Affairs has launched a new mental health initiative to assist veteran's experiencing the affects of mental illness and their families. Providing information and fact sheets about understanding mental illness, links and contact information for accessing support, and online resources for health professionals, this website focuses on helping veterans identify early warning signs of mental illness to effectively manage their mental illness and seek treatment. For more info or to access, please visit www.at-ease.dva.gov.au

. 1st Battalion 83rd Artillery...



Dedicated to the men of the 1st Battalion 83rd Artillery who served in Vietnam from 1966-1971. We left Fort Sill in October 1966 for Vietnam. We originally were at Bear Cat, Nui Dat and Xuan Loc. We later were in many other locations in Vietnam. We also welcome our Australian and New Zealand Allies to whom we owe so much.

It is also dedicated to those members of the 1/83rd who did not return. We will never forget their sacrifice. Website: <http://www.1stbn83rdartyvietnam.com>



The Royal New Zealand Artillery Association

<http://www.rnzaa.org.nz/>

Editor contact email: 131eyesandears@gmail.com Ed – Paul 'Dicko' Dickson
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