

News Release

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Hon Jack Snelling
Minister for Employment, Training
and Further Education
Minister for Science and Information
Economy
Minister for Road Safety
Minister for Veterans' Affairs

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TRIBUTE TO SA VIETNAM VETERAN

An important chapter in the Vietnam War, and in South Australia's military history, will be finally brought to a close today.

Veterans' Affairs Minister, Jack Snelling says a dedication is being made in Canberra today to South Australian Flying Officer Michael Herbert, as part of commemorations being held at the Vietnam War Memorial," Mr Snelling said.

"Flying Officer Herbert from Glenelg was lost while conducting a bombing mission in Vietnam on November 3 1971. His remains - and those of his fellow crew member, Pilot Officer Robert Carver - were not found until last year.

"When the Vietnam War Memorial was dedicated in 1992, six granite bench seats were placed around it – each one in honour of a serviceman who was, at the time, still missing in action.

"Individual seat have been dedicated as these servicemen have been progressively recovered.

"Today, the Governor General will dedicate the last two seats to Michael Herbert and Robert Carver - the last two servicemen lost missing in action to be recovered from Vietnam.

"The State Government and the South Australian veterans' community will be represented at today's dedication by the Director of Veterans' SA, Mr Bill Denny, who attended the ceremony with Michael's brother, Mr Shane Herbert."

Mr Snelling also paid tribute today to South Australian veterans attending a service in Adelaide commemorating the Battle of Long Tan - the largest single conflict in which Australians were involved in the Vietnam War.

"The Battle of Long Tan was the defining military engagement of the Vietnam War for Australia," Mr Snelling said.

"The Australian victory was so comprehensive that the North Vietnamese never again attempted a major attack against Australians in Phouc Tuy province, nor did they attempt any significant attack against the Australian base at Nui Dat.

"The men who fought at Long Tan were a mix of 108 regulars and national servicemen who'd only been in Vietnam for nine weeks.

"They engaged a combined force of over 2,500 North Vietnamese regular and guerrilla soldiers. Of the eighteen Australians killed at the Battle of Long Tan, eleven were national servicemen.

“A Vietnam Veterans’ Day Service is also being held at the Repatriation General Hospital today to remember Australia’s involvement in our longest and most controversial war.

“While ANZAC Day commemorates those who made the ultimate sacrifice throughout Australia’s wartime history, it’s also important to individually recognise the efforts of those who served in such a significant conflict.

“Between 1963 and 1971 over 500 Australians were killed and 2,500 wounded in Vietnam. Of those killed, 58 came from South Australia,” Mr Snelling said.

Today’s services follow Vietnam Veterans’ Day commemorations last weekend.