



**Message from the Office of the State Minister for Veterans' Affairs
Issue 84 (26 October, 2010)**

Please find below a message from Bill Denny AM, Director, Veterans SA for your information, distribution and possible use in newsletters, and on "Veterans" themed radio programs.

ANZAC Day Commemorative March 2011 - Historic flyover

Veterans SA is pleased to announce that it is working with the ANZAC Day Committee of the RSL to ensure a traditional flyover by historic service aircraft during future ANZAC Day Marches.

As many will know, a flyover is an important part of our ANZAC Day March. Sadly it can be problematic with serving RAAF aircraft being withdrawn at the last minute due to operational commitments.

Many also comment that as impressive as a flyover by a modern aircraft can be, it is "current generation" and not an aircraft flown during the period of service of many of our marchers.

Salvation has come in an offer of service of Mr Barry Hills of Hindmarsh Island. Barry is a former Qantas employee and he owns a Tiger Moth aircraft.

Barry is one of a group of local aviation enthusiasts who said they would be happy to assist.

The Tiger Moth is a beautiful aircraft that is synonymous with the RAAF and recognised by every veteran. They first flew in 1931 and entered service in 1932.

The Tiger Moth became the foremost training aircraft of the RAAF before it was retired in 1959. 8,868 aircraft were constructed and many still survive.

Following a formal request from the ANZAC Day Committee and supported by funding provided by the Hon. Jack Snelling, M.P. Minister for Veterans Affairs, up to five Tiger Moth aircraft in RAAF livery will take part in a flyover during the 2011 ANZAC Day Commemorative March and hopefully, in subsequent marches.

**Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia - National Congress
In Adelaide 22 - 23 October 2010.**

The Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia held its National Congress in Adelaide last weekend.

The Hon. Jack Snelling M.P. Minister for Veterans affairs welcomed delegates at a reception held at the Combined Mess, Torrens Parade Ground on Friday evening.

From all accounts the Congress was very successful. Major among issues discussed were the erosion of the Service Pension, the Special Rate Pension and the increasing gap between it and the Disability Pension (General Rate).

A copy of the welcome speech delivered by Minister Snelling is attached.

Operation ANODE

Operation ANODE is the name given to the ADF contribution to the Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI). RAMSI's assistance is known as Operation HELPEM FREN (Pidgin English for 'Helping Friend'). RAMSI's mission is to assist the Solomon Islands Government in restoring law and order and economic governance.

RAMSI is comprised of personnel from four nations - Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Tonga.

The main task for the military component is to provide security for RAMSI's multinational Participating Police Force (P.P.F.) that works with the Royal Solomon Islands Police in maintaining law and order. Specialist military staff in RAMSI headquarters are also responsible for coordinating the military effort with the P.P.F.

Since the introduction of RAMSI in 2003, the number of Australian troops deployed has fluctuated depending on requirements in the region. After the rioting that followed the April 2006 general elections, RAMSI military personnel have continued their contribution to maintaining a calming effect on the situation in the Solomon Islands. In April 2009 the Government agreed to the extension of Operation ANODE until June, 2010.

Since 2007, the ADF has deployed eight Army Reserve Company groups accounting for more than 800 part-time soldiers. The deployment of these ADF personnel, at the invitation of the Solomon Islands Government, aims to ensure the ongoing success of RAMSI in improving law and order in the Solomon Islands. Australia remains determined to ensure that the law and order established in the Solomon Islands is maintained.

This weekend a parade will be held to farewell South Australian Soldiers heading to the Solomon Islands for a four month rotation on Operation Anode. The Minister for Veterans' Affairs wishes our young men and women well. They serve in our name and we are all particularly proud of their professionalism and dedication. We know that the people of the Solomon Islands will benefit greatly from the support of this group of "HELPEM FREN"(s).

Calling all Veterans of Kokoda, Tobruk, Kapyong and Long Tan

Veterans will recall that in June this year, Premier Mike Rann announced that some of Australia's most famous military battles will be honoured along the almost-complete Northern Expressway.

Veterans SA would like to hear from veterans who served on the Kokoda Track, in Tobruk or who were at or associated with the Battle of Kapyong or the Battle of Long Tan. This will enable Veterans SA to keep you apprised of information and events relating to the naming of the five expressway interchanges.

The unveiling ceremony for the interchanges is set to occur on 12 November. Any members of the veterans' community who wish to attend this ceremony are encouraged to call Simon from Veterans SA on 8226 8541. Numbers are limited, however Veterans SA will make every effort to accommodate those wishing to attend.

For more information about any of the items mentioned, please contact Simon at Veterans SA on 8226 8541.

EVENT: Reception to acknowledge the National Congress of the Vietnam Veterans' Association of Australia
LOCATION: Combined Mess, Torrens Training Depot, Victoria Drive, Adelaide
DATE: Friday 22 October 2010, 7.00pm.

Speech

I am pleased to welcome the visitors among you to South Australia.

I hope that your Congress is fruitful and your stay in our State enjoyable.

I am the State Minister for Veterans' Affairs and have held that appointment for just over six months.

I was appointed Minister after our last State Election and I follow the inaugural Minister, Michael Atkinson, who represented the veterans community in South Australia with passion and commitment since the portfolio was established in June 2008.

I come to this portfolio as something of a novice – but not entirely so!

My father served in Vietnam with 1 A.R.U., 1 R.A.R. and 5 R.A.R., so I am somewhat familiar with the Vietnam conflict and the Australian commitment to it.

I think that being the son of a veteran gives me a special affinity with you and all members of the broader ex-service community.

To reinforce my commitment and desire to understand more fully your conflict, I will soon be departing for a parliamentary tour of Vietnam.

While my other portfolio of Employment, Training and Further Education is the main reason for my visit, I will be taking the opportunity to visit Long Tan and Nui Dat.

At the long Tan Cross I will pay my respects to your comrades who fought in the defining battle of the Vietnam War – the Battle of Long Tan.

As you will recall, 108 young men of D company 6 R.A.R. who had only been deployed to Nui Dat for 74 days, defeated a mostly professional force of over 2,500.

That Australian victory is more impressive when you recognise that the battle took place at a time and location of the enemy's choosing.

At Nui Dat I will visit the kindergarten that has been re-established largely through Australian aid and through the efforts of former Australian soldiers.

It is now a facility much valued by the local community.

I know that when my predecessor visited Vietnam he met with the 2IC of D445 Battalion, but that gentleman is aging so I'm not sure if I will get that opportunity.

I will make this visit to Vietnam to better inform myself and pay my respects to all those who served in that country.

I hope something will come of seeing the jungle, the rubber plantations and experiencing the humidity.

I hope something will come from the red dust and mud that will no doubt cling to my shoes (probably in the same day!!)

Of course my visit will be during peacetime and any inconvenience I experience will be tempered by recognizing that I will not be experiencing Vietnam on **active service**.

I am sure I will return better informed.

It is an undeniable fact that we are all getting older.

The rear party of the 1st Australian Task Force departed Vietnam 38 years and 8 months ago – that was around the time I was born!!!!

Most Vietnam veterans are in their 60's – many are older!

I mention this because the number of veterans in all conflicts up to Vietnam is dwindling.

Natural attrition is seeing to that!

As a cohort the question you must be considering is – where to from here?

Of course there are veterans from more recent conflicts, but the undeniable fact is that they are generations away from you.

There is no guarantee that they will view the world the same way you do, nor hold as important the same things you do.

So my question to you is this.

Do you simply fade away quietly, or do you take a stand and make yourself relevant to the future – even if your Vietnam Veteran membership declines?

If you haven't formulated a policy to address these challenges, a Congress like this might be the right place to do so.

Let me toss my "tuppence worth" in to help get things rolling!

The way I see it you have two options.

Everyone knows that “numbers” are what you need if you want to influence any decision eg if you want influence a government decision or policy!

So your first challenge might be to increase your numbers – preferably with **like minded** people

As a young bloke detached from all the tribal loyalties of ex-service organisations I want to ask the hard question.

What about amalgamation with other Vietnam Veteran organisations?

Have you thought about it?

You might find this hard to believe, but many in the community wonder why so many Vietnam veteran organisations even exist!

Having so many similar organisations does not help the credibility of any particular one and diminishes the power of each.

If your power base decreases, your capacity to help your membership decreases.

As individual groups you could find yourself slowly trudging down the track toward **“irrelevance”**.

I don't know your long term strategy and it may well be that you are happy to have the last member “turn out the lights”

I hope that is not the case, but it is an option you retain.

If, however, you have a grander vision for the long term, then maybe you might consider my suggestion in a bit more detail.

I have some background that could inform your discussions.

It seems to offer the best of both worlds.

It does not require direct “amalgamation” and it does allow you to gain more power and influence.

It is a model we created in this State and I think it works really well.

Let me call it the Veterans' Advisory Council or V.A.C. model!

As far as this South Australia is concerned, I believe we have a very good relationship with our entire ex-service community, especially our Vietnam Veteran organisations.

The way we ensure that “numbers” and “influence” is retained for the entire veterans’ community is to establish a Veterans Advisory Council.

This is a Council that has a line of communication direct to the Cabinet table.

It truly represents the entire veterans’ community and is a priceless resource for Government.

The VAC comprises 13 members and is chaired by a distinguished former Governor, Sir Eric Neal.

Interestingly, six members on the V.A.C. are Vietnam Veterans.

While Paul Coppock admirably represents your Association views, I know that several other Vietnam Veteran members are members of your Association.

So it is fair to say that from a State level our V.V.A. punches well above its weight!

This model of state /veteran community relations has proven to be enormously successful and I know that Tasmania has adopted a very similar model.

They don’t enjoy the benefit of an independent Chair, but the rest of their structure is identical to ours.

I think other states are looking to do a similar thing.

This “V.A.C.” model gives the veteran community a real say at State level and a strong partner to help advocate with the Federal government.

Let me give you an example of what I mean.

I am sure you are all aware of the controversy surrounding military superannuation and the “Matthews Review”.

It was prominent in the lead up to the Federal election.

You might also note that the only Premier to take up this specific cause on behalf of **all veterans** was Mike Rann, the Premier of South Australia.

He wrote to Prime Minister Gillard to express “the profound disquiet within the veteran community on the issue of military superannuation.”

He was the only Premier to put his head “over the parapet.”

He did so because he was asked to advocate by the V.A.C.!

As a former National President of the Labor Party I think his actions showed real loyalty.

Loyalty to veterans and faith in the judgement of the VAC.

Another other success brought to fruition by our VAC. was sheeted home last week.

A National Commission has been set up in Canberra to examine the way we should commemorate the Centenary of ANZAC in 2015.

It comprises six members including former Prime Minister's Fraser and Hawke.

The first task of the Commission is to draw together suggested projects that would best commemorate this profoundly important centenary.

Some of you may have made submissions to the Commission yourself.

The advantage of having a V.A.C. is that South Australia had already looked at this issue as long as 2 years ago!

Each of our member organisations had canvassed the views of their membership over a period of 12 months.

We prepared a consolidated list of 19 suggested projects that we short listed into ten.

We presented them, in order of preference, to the National Commission last Friday at Parliament House in Canberra.

I don't want to boast, but I have to say that the content of the South Australian presentation was excellent.

Indeed we were the only State to be singled out for recognition.

Sadly other State's had not even started to address the issue.

Of course other State's still have plenty of time to catch up, but I am proud that consequent upon early planning, South Australia and its veteran community will play a leading role in what will be the single largest commemoration in our nation's history!

Indirectly that pride extends to every member organisation of our V.A.C.

I will conclude now as I think I have given you more than enough issues to consider.

I wish you successful deliberations over the next two days and thank you again for coming to South Australia to hold your National Congress.

Lest we forget.