

# RSL WODEN VALLEY SUB-BRANCH



Current Items of Interest

18 August 2023

## REMINDER !

### Information Seminars in August 2023

The Sub-Branch is having two (2) information seminars in late August this year.

#### Deafness Resource Centre:

The first information seminar is to be held between 10.00am and 12.00pm in Room 36 on the top floor (near the lift) of Grant Cameron Offices on Wednesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> August. The session is to be presented by Mr Joe Symons of the Deafness Resource Centre which is also located downstairs in the Grant Cameron Offices at Holder. The talk will entail what products that people can access such as visual, vibrating and audible smoke alarms for persons with hearing loss. Advice on “Konnekt” video phones. Information will also be given on what can be claimed from Department of Veterans’ Affairs

#### Right Sizing with Care and Decluttering:

The second information session will be conducted by Melissa Fressier. This session will be held between 10.00am and 12.00pm in Room 36 on the top floor (near the lift) of Grant Cameron on Wednesday, 30<sup>th</sup> August Many of our members, as they get older find that they no longer require many of the things that have been collected or purchased over the years. Also, people may need to reduce the size of the accommodation that they have. Some of our members have taken steps to declutter or find smaller and more practical accommodation to better suit their altered lifestyle. A talk will be presented allowing time for a question and answer session.

Each of the sessions will provide coffee and tea as well as a light lunch. The sessions perform two functions – inform people on practical solutions to issues as well as get people out to socialise and meet others.

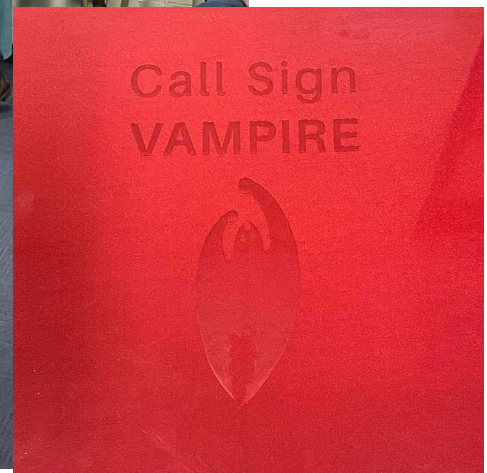
There is no charge for each session, but we would welcome a donation towards the cost.

If you would like to attend one or both these sessions please contact the Sub-Branch [6285 1931](tel:62851931). Room 36 can comfortably hold 25 people.

Peter Sutton

Woden Valley RSL Sub-Branch - Welfare

**1st Australia Field Hospital Association Incorporated AGM on Thursday 17 August.  
President 1AFH Assoc Rod Searle presented to Jim Gilchrist a book `Call Sign Vampire`.**



## Statement from the Department of Veterans' Affairs - Veterans' MATES program



Australian Government  
Department of Veterans' Affairs

The Veterans' MATES program has been operating for more than 18 years to provide a valuable proactive service addressing 'real life' health care problems in the veteran community. Specifically, the program seeks to positively change veteran medicine usage, and increase the uptake of complementary DVA funded health services, all to support veteran wellbeing and a reduction in adverse medicine events.

The University of South Australia is contracted by DVA to deliver the Veterans' MATES program on DVA's behalf.

The program takes an evidence based, targeted approach, using a team of clinical experts to develop current health and medicine information, using secure and private billing data to identify members of the veteran community who would benefit from receiving this information.

Identified data is only used to determine veterans who are at risk of medicine related problems, writing to the veteran and their doctor to bring them together to have a positive conversation that is tailored to the veteran's specific health care needs. All other data used in the program is de-identified.

DVA takes privacy very seriously, and we would like to assure veterans and families that DVA and the University of South Australia have strict policies in place to ensure the appropriate protection of personal information, and that ethics approval remains in place, guiding the delivery of the program.

Since the program's inception, the Veterans' MATES program has reached more than 300,000 veterans. Each year approximately 77,000 veterans receive health educational material from Veterans' MATES, specific to their health care needs. Veterans report they find the information useful, and that it empowers them to take an active role in their own health. This targeted and timely information and support for veterans, and their healthcare teams, has achieved many positive health outcomes across a range of health issues affecting the veteran community. Evidence shows that adverse medicine events have been reduced and that veteran access to suitable health services has increased.

We would like to reassure veterans and families that there has not been a breach of their data, and there is no systemic data security issue. The recent determination by the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) relates to an individual case in 2017 whereby the individual opted out of participation in the program and DVA did not fully implement this request. DVA has unequivocally apologised for this.

Veterans have always had the ability to opt out of the program, however DVA has taken steps to more prominently communicate this, so veterans can make an informed decision about their participation.

The OAIC determination has highlighted that DVA's notices to veterans could include more information about how their billing information would be used for the purpose of the MATES program. More information about privacy, and the ability of veterans to opt-out of the MATES program has been added to DVA's website and MATES program materials.

The Secretary has requested a review of the MATES program to ensure that all requests to opt out of the program have been actioned appropriately, and to provide further assurance of compliance with the opt out provisions under the program.

DVA is engaging with the OAIC openly and in good faith, as it looks to improve its processes.

More information about the MATES program and the use of personal information can be found at [Veterans' MATES | Department of Veterans' Affairs \(dva.gov.au\)](#) and [Home \(veteransmates.net.au\)](#)

Regards,  
Sonia Gregory  
Acting Deputy Commissioner NSW/ACT  
Director, Claims Processing and Education Schemes  
Claims Assessment Branch  
Client Benefits Division  
m 0473 811 977  
e [sonia.gregory@dva.gov.au](mailto:sonia.gregory@dva.gov.au)



Topics include:

- Knowledge, skills and resources to assist the transition to civilian life
- The transition process – in both practical and emotional terms
- Personal and social adjustments following discharge.

Stepping Out is a two day group program developed for ADF members and their partners who are about to, or have recently, separated from the military.

Our next programs are:

Date: Tuesday 5th & Wednesday 6th September

Time: 9:30am - 4:30pm

Location: Woden, ACT

Registration closes: 28th August 2023

To register for this program, call **1800 011 046**, or visit [OpenArms.gov.au](https://OpenArms.gov.au) and search for 'Stepping Out'.



**Topics include:**

- Understanding mindfulness; a practice to shift focus from 'what has happened in the past' and 'what may happen in the future' to 'what is happening right now'.

Relaxation and Stress Management is a one day group program designed to introduce you to mindfulness - a strategy to assist in the alleviation of a variety of moderate physical and psychological conditions such as pain, stress and depression.

**Our next program is:**

**Date:** Friday 15th September

**Time:** 9:30am - 4:30pm

**Location:** Woden, ACT

**Registration closes:** 8th September 2023

To register for this program, call **1800 011 046**, or visit **OpenArms.gov.au** and search for 'Stress and Relaxation'.

# Royal Commission Dead Line!

Tell your mates: Royal Commission deadline is fast approaching

People now have fewer than 70 days to lodge a submission with the Royal Commission examining the treatment of veterans and serving ADF members.

**Submissions must be lodged by Friday October 13.**

But there's good news: lawyers from the Defence and Veterans Legal Service are providing free assistance with the preparation of submissions to that enquiry.

This legal service has specialist lawyers in all states and territories, and it also assists the families of current and ex-serving people.

Importantly, its legal support is confidential and completely independent of all agencies - including ADF, DVA and the Defence Department.

The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide represents a major opportunity. It aims to right past wrongs and improve the treatment of current and future veterans and ADF personnel.

If you'd like to know more, call the Defence and Veterans Legal Service on 1800 33 1800 to chat about your options. You can remain anonymous if you wish to. All its services are free.

**Share your story  
with the Royal  
Commission into  
Defence and  
Veteran Suicide  
by 13 October 2023**



For free and independent help with the preparation of a submission, call us on **1800 33 1800**



# Legacy Centenary Torch Relay

Dear Friend,

This year, Legacy, that uniquely Australian organisation, commemorates the centenary of its formation in 1923 to care for the widows and children of members of the Australian Defence Force who died during World War 1. Our founders, returned soldiers, remembered the pledges they made on the battlefield to their mortally wounded mates that they would “look after your missus and kids’. This work has continued ever since with Canberra Legacy’s 135 active, volunteer Legatees currently caring in practical ways and financially, for 760 widows and 35 youth of school age or attending tertiary education. This results in an expenditure of about \$700,000 each year.

The major commemorative event is the carriage of a torch around Australia by Legatees and Legacy beneficiaries. The torch started its journey in Pozieres on the 23rd of April and passed through London before arriving in Perth three months ago. I’ve volunteered to carry the torch part of the way as it passes through Canberra on Monday, the 28th of August. As you can see, I’ve received my torch bearers' uniform and am now in training!



The Torch Relay aims to raise \$10m for Legacy’s ongoing work Australia-wide with more than half of it having come already from donations and corporate support. Torch bearers have been asked to seek sponsorship for their participation so I’m writing to invite you to consider supporting Legacy in this way. If you feel inclined to do so, please go to the following website:

[Legs for Legacy - Ian Gollings](#)

With much thanks for supporting Legacy.

Cheers, Ian

## **NCF Members - Defence and Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy (the Strategy) Survey**

The Department of Defence (Defence) and the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) are working together to develop a new joint *Defence and Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy* (the Strategy). The Strategy will inform our joint approach to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of Defence personnel and the veteran community over the next five years. Hearing directly from members of our veteran community is a critical part of the development of the Strategy.

The purpose of this survey is to seek your insights to inform the development of the Strategy. It is an opportunity for you to have a say in what matters to you and help ensure the Strategy reflects the needs, priorities, and aspirations of the veteran community.

The survey should take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete. It will close at midnight AEST on 28 August 2023. Further information on who can participate, consent, confidentiality and privacy is available in the link below and will be displayed prior to survey completion.

**Please follow the link to complete the survey here:**

[Qualtrics Survey | Qualtrics Experience Management](#)

If you have questions about the survey please email

[MENTALHEALTHSTRATEGY@dva.gov.au](mailto:MENTALHEALTHSTRATEGY@dva.gov.au).

Please share the survey with your networks.

Kind regards,

ESORT Secretariat



## Republic of Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm unit Citation

Dear All,

You will recall that in September 2018 an application was made to Defence Honours and Awards that those members of the Army who served at Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral should be awarded the Republic of Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm Unit Citation (the VCGPU or Citation).

After much correspondence the application was eventually denied by Army and I then appealed to the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal. On 31 May 2022 the Tribunal advised me that it had;

Decided to recommend that all units and elements of the 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Task Force – Vietnam be awarded the VCGPU: and

Also recommend to the Minister that the Department of Defence be directed to consider whether there are any other units of the Australian Defence Force that should similarly be recommended to be awarded the VCGPU.

I am pleased to advise you that today I have received a letter from the Hon Matt Keogh MP, the Minister for Defence Personnel, that the Department of Defence has recently completed the necessary research required to identify the relevant units, and consequently individuals, who are eligible to apply for and receive the Citation. I also received my Citation in today's mail.

As soon as practical please draw the attention of your members to this welcome decision and to the following webpage on the Directorate of Honours and Awards website,

[Republic of Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm Unit Citation | ADF Members and Families | Defence.](#)

This page includes a further site, [List of Army Units eligible for the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm Unit Citation \(PDF 191.07 KB\).](#)

Information on making an application for the Citation, including those made by family members of deceased Vietnam veterans who may be eligible, can be found at

[Defence Medals Application Form | ADF Members and Families | Defence.](#)

With best regards,

Max Ball

**For more information please copy this link and open it in your browser:**

**<https://www.defence.gov.au/adf-members-families/honours-awards/medals/foreign-awards/republic-vietnam-cross-gallantry-palm-unit-citation>**

Intimate, raw in places, sometimes shocking, always authentic. To those who would aspire to lead that part of the Nation's treasure, our men and women in military uniform, read this book.

Peter Casgrove, Infantry Platoon Commander, Vietnam - 1969/70

A most accurate and enduring example of Australian Infantry operations at platoon level; comparable in quality and impact to the classic *All Quiet on the Western Front*.

LTCOL Russell Linwood, ASM - Bibliographer Royal Australian Regiment Association

Dave's book is well worth reading and young officers would be well advised to get a copy and understand what makes a good platoon, commanded by a very good platoon commander.

Harry Smith SQ MC

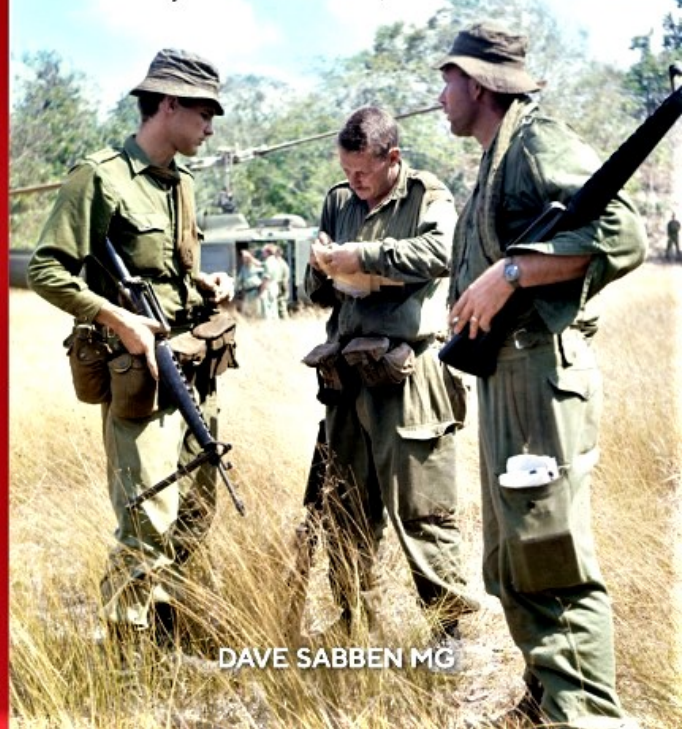


MENTIONS IN DESPATCHES

DAVE SABBen MG

# MENTIONS IN DESPATCHES

An Infantry Platoon in Viet Nam, June 1966 - June 1967



DAVE SABBen MG

## VIET NAM

We know about the politics that got us into and out of the 'war'. We know about the big battles: Long Tan, Coral, Balmoral, Binh Ba... We know about the social issues: conscription, drugs, moratoriums, the uneasy returns home... And we know about the legacy: the trauma, the PTSD, the divorces, the suicides...

But do we know what actually happened there? Do we know exactly what our soldiers did, day-by-day, week-by-week? Do we understand what they experienced? What they did? What they thought about what they did?

This book will take you into an average Infantry Platoon for a 12-month 'Tour of Duty' in the year the Task Force base was set up.

It will take you from the early days - June 1966 - when a bare rubber plantation was occupied in the middle of an enemy controlled province, and a new operational base established.

Hundreds of soldiers endured getting six two-hour sleeps every three days for weeks on end. In between those sleeps, they patrolled with heavy kit in dust-dry or monsoon-wet (but always-dangerous) conditions to clear the enemy from their own bases. And when not on patrol, they were digging pits, trenches, command posts and latrines. When not on patrol or digging, they were clearing the undergrowth and erecting barbed wire fences.

And when they did sleep, it was on groundsheet under plastic 'hoochies' without lights and always with a weapon within reach. Showers were rare but mildew was everywhere. Food was mostly out of ration cans; feet were rarely out of boots.

It was only later, when the base was a little more secure, that tents and stretcher beds became available. Then the pace did slacken, but only slightly. One- and two-day patrols gave way to one- and two-week operations, as they cleared further out from the Nui Dat base.

## ORDER NOW

400+ A4 pages - 500+ images - quality 'coffee table' book  
\$82 + postage

## HOW TO ORDER:

Through our website:

[www.sabbenmidbook.com](http://www.sabbenmidbook.com)  
with your credit card details.

Or payment can be made by Direct Debit  
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(sabbenMIDbook).

Please put the name of the person ordering  
on Direct Deposits.

Once funds are received, book(s) will be sent  
to the nominated delivery address  
along with a tracking number we will provide.

Please advise if you require an invoice.

Special arrangements can be made for quantities  
or specific delivery instructions. Or you can order  
your book(s) now and pay later.

In either of these cases, please email:  
[dave@sabbenmidbook.com](mailto:dave@sabbenmidbook.com)

Once your order is received, we will contact you  
before posting to ask how you would like the book(s)  
endorsed by the author. In this case, your  
phone or email contact details will be required.



DAVE SABBen MG

David Sabben was born in Suva, Fiji in 1945 but moved to Australia in 1958 to attend High School in Sydney, where he boarded through to Leaving Certificate in 1962.

Aged 20 in 1965, Dave volunteered for the first intake of Australia's National Service scheme. He applied for officer training and completed the first course of the Scheyville National Service Officer Training Unit (1OTU).

In January 1966 Dave was posted to 6RAR in Brisbane and appointed commander of 12 Platoon. 6RAR was sent to Viet Nam in June 1966. Dave served the full 12 month tour and was a platoon commander at the Battle of Long Tan for which he was recommended for a Military Cross (MC) but that award was downgraded to an MID. In 2008, the award was upgraded to a Medal for Gallantry (MG).

After returning to Australia in 1967, Dave was discharged from his National Service obligation but served a further four years with the CMF, attaining Captain rank. He resumed his civilian career first in Sydney and then Melbourne, finally working as a Project Manager in the computer (IT) industry.

Dave retired in December 2004 and has spent his retirement mostly writing. He lives on the Mornington Peninsula in Victoria with his Melbourne born wife, Di.

# AVCAT Scholarships

Hello,

**Applications for AVCAT scholarships open soon.**

Scholarships | Australian Veterans' Children Assistance Trust (avcat.org.au) including the Long Tan Bursary | Department of Veterans' Affairs (dva.gov.au) are tertiary scholarships for the children and grandchildren of Australian ex-serving veterans. Scholarships are \$4000–\$6000 per year, for up to three years.

Applications open on 18 August 2023, Vietnam Veterans' Day, and close at midnight AEDT on 31 October 2023.

**Apply online at Australian Veterans & Children Assistance Trust (avcat.org.au)**

Applicants must be:

- Enrolled or planning to enrol in a full-time course for one or more academic year's duration at a university, TAFE, or RTO in 2024
- The child, stepchild, foster child, or grandchild of an Australian ex-serving veteran
- An Australian citizen or permanent resident

In receipt of, or eligible to receive, a means-tested Commonwealth educational payment – Youth Allowance, ABSTUDY, Austudy or Veterans' Children Education Scheme (VCES) in 2024

The Long Tan Bursary is sponsored by the Australian Government Department of Veterans' Affairs. View the complete list of AVCAT Scholarship sponsors Sponsors | Australian Veterans' Children Assistance Trust (avcat.org.au)

Find information about scholarships, the application process or scholarship eligibility at Australian Veterans & Children Assistance Trust (avcat.org.au)

## **Spread The Word**

Share on [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#), hang a [poster](#), hand out a [flyer](#), or drop [this notice](#) into your newsletter.

**Kind Regards**

**Len Russell**

**CEO AVCAT**

**Find Out More :** [Scholarships | Australian Veterans' Children Assistance Trust \(avcat.org.au\)](#)



**COFFEE CATCH UP  
EVERY FRIDAY 10-12**

Members and guests are welcome to join us for a chat and enjoy freshly brewed coffee & cake with former service mates. Every Friday from 10 to 12 in The Corey Room, Level 2A, of the Grant Cameron Community Centre, 27 Mulley Street, Holder.

The Eddison Day Club will continue to meet for a lunch each Friday at noon until we can once again meet at a reinvigorated Day Club.

Come and join us for lunch.



**Contact Us**

Give us a call for more information  
or access to our services

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Visit us on the web at  
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Office hours are  
9am-3pm Mon-Fri

**PS.**

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