

Our peace heroes 'ignored'

BY HOWARD JONES

MEN and women who have served in peacemaking and peacekeeping roles for Australia yesterday held a service in Wodonga to honour fallen comrades.

But one of their leaders, former commando Paul Copeland OAM, was anything but happy about the lack of recognition they received and at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.

He regretted the memorial didn't allow the names of Australian peacemakers and peacekeepers who had died in East Timor, Fiji, Cyprus and other places to be honoured on its bronze wall where relatives may place poppies.

Such sailors, soldiers and airmen only have

their names recorded in the memorial's Book of Remembrance.

"They are in locked cabinet in an obscure part of the memorial," he told about 60 participants, including member for Indi Sophie Mirabella and member for Murray Valley Sharman Stone.

Mr Copeland said 41 people had died in such operations, which the memorial noted as "non-warlike service".

Mr Copeland, of Torquay, is a former national president of the Australian Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Veterans Association. He has served in Cambodia, Sinai, Tonga and Vanuatu.

He was in the region for a reunion at Wangaratta for those who, like him, served in Cambodia 20 years ago.

Retired colonel Brian Murtagh, of Rutherglen, who served in a senior role in Cambodia in 1992-93, also attended.

Chaplain Rod Bailey led prayers for all military who served in the pursuit of peace and security.

"They remember the trauma of serving in troubled lands, the sickness, the separation from loved ones, the tragedies, the feelings of frustration caused by the strange rules of engagement," Mr Bailey said.

"Some returned to problem situations in their own families, others experienced breakdowns, disappointments, disillusionment and loneliness."

Yesterday was the 65th anniversary of Australia's first peacemaking mission in what was then the Dutch East Indies.



● Paul Copeland addresses the Wodonga service yesterday. Pictures: JOHN RUSSELL