

Australian Peacekeeper

AUTUMN 2026

MAGAZINE



WHY ANZAC DAY
MATTERS

HOW SPORT
HELPS **VETS**

SELLING ASSETS
DIMINISHES
DEFENCE

CALL TO RESTORE
NATIONAL
SERVICE

CONTRIBUTE TO
PEACE, NOT WAR





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Anzac Day didgeridoo player Australian Army Warrant Officer Class Two Lachlan Youll rehearses at Anzac Cove on the Gallipoli Peninsula, Türkiye.
Photo / LISIS Susan Mossop

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Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people should be aware this publication contains images and names of deceased persons

We welcome input from members and their personal experiences in each issue.

Email the editor with an initial 300 word draft you feel would be worth fleshing out to be published in a future edition.

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Australian Peacekeepers Magazine is published quarterly by the Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans’ Association Ltd (ABN 36 651 805 702) © 2024. All rights reserved: www.peacekeepers.asn.au

Australian Peacekeepers Magazine attempts to provide insight into the experiences of peacekeepers, Defence members and war veterans and the issues that confront them together with encouraging informed debate regarding issues dealing with but not limited to Commonwealth compensation, pensions, superannuation and occupational health and safety that affect Peacekeepers and their families.

The views expressed in the articles are those of the particular author and not those of the Australian Peacekeeper & Peacemaker Veterans’ Association. The APPVA will not be legally responsible in contract, tort or otherwise for any statement made in the articles in this publication.

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Chairperson's Report



Welcome to the Autumn 2026 edition of the Australian Peacekeeper Magazine which has been brought to life by the hard work of the Editor Karl Patterson and the APPVA CEO Rod Henderson.

We sincerely thank all who contributed their time and articles, and hope that you enjoy reading this latest edition.

It has been a time of both great change and great achievement within the Australian Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Veterans Association since our last edition. Our Board of eight has welcomed five new Directors with plans for the addition of another Director to represent our AFP community.

Our board hosts a diverse range of skill-sets and experience, and are keen to expand on the steadfast foundations set by our predecessors. Of note, we would like to pay particular tribute to Ian Lindgren, a past-president who ably steered the association for many years and has provided the new Board with wise counsel as the Board Advisor.

Ian has recently stepped down from his Advisor appointment and we wish him much success and relaxation in retirement.

Despite the many changes, rest assured that our purpose and vision remain aligned with AAPVA existing to recognise, connect, support, and advocate for all Australians who serve or have served in Australia's peacekeeping, peacemaking and HADR operations in Australia and overseas.

We honour and care deeply for the dedication, courage, and sacrifices of Peacekeeper and HADR Veterans. We strive to foster a strong and enduring bond among

Veterans, built on trust, respect and shared experience. We are committed to supporting one another and our families to ensure that no Veteran feels isolated or forgotten.

We also aim to preserve and promote the legacy of peacekeeping service, remembering those who did not return and educating future generations. We will continue to advocate for the recognition well-being, and fair treatment of all Peacekeeping and HADR Veterans.

I want to thank you all for your perseverance during a time of technological difficulties within AAPVA. I would like to thank our CEO Rod Henderson for his efforts in developing our new look website and membership program.

I urge you all to visit our new website at <https://peacekeepers.asn.au> and to let us know what you think, what needs improving, or what you would like to see. Unfortunately, while our memberships portal was non-operational we lost a number of members. Rod is attempting to contact those whose memberships lapsed during this time and we urge you to reengage if you can.

Exciting times are ahead for the Association. I will not steal Rod's thunder as I am sure that he will update you all in the following CEO Report. However, I would like to highlight the continued advocacy at the individual and national forum level from our Advocacy team and others including Ian Lindgren and Paul Copeland.

We have also been successful in obtaining grants and funding for our numerous projects in support of current and veteran peacekeepers. There is also exciting progress on the "A Distant



DR ALISON KAINE CSM

Peace Documentary" which aims to draw a spotlight on the work and experiences of Australian veterans who served in Namibia.

We are also one step closer to realising our goals of erecting a monument to ADF Personnel who have died in training, our Return to Namibia initiative, and our Care Package initiative.

Please also mark 12 September 2026 in your calendar, and join us at the Australian War Memorial for the Peacekeeper Dinner 2026 which will honour the service and sacrifice of Australian Peacekeepers since 1947 and also celebrate the opening of the Australian War Memorial Peacekeeper Galleries.

I now invite you to explore this latest edition of the Australian Peacekeeper Magazine and I look forward to working with you into the future.

Ali Kaine CSM

Chairperson

Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans' Association

alison.kaine@peacekeepers.asn.au

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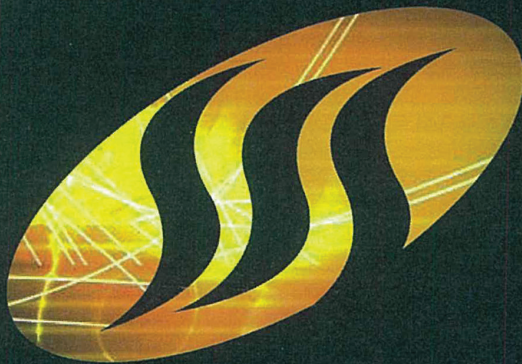


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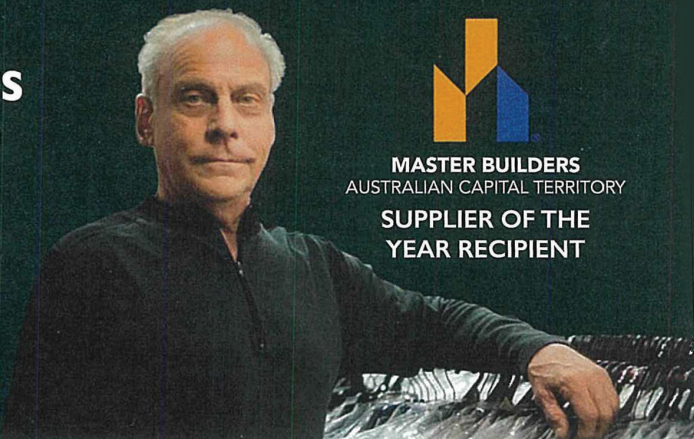
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From the CEO's Desk

G'day everyone. I've officially been in the role for 12 months now, and what a busy year it's been. It's encouraging to see so many new projects kick off, which I hope reflects the stronger member focus and program delivery model I was elected to implement.

So, where are we at after 12 months? Here's a snapshot of a few key developments.

I'll start with an honest note. Not being able to provide an update in a Summer edition of the magazine wasn't ideal. As you know, we're an entirely non-remunerated, all-volunteer association, and that means projects are prioritised based on limited resources and the availability of dedicated volunteers. In this case, I made the call to pause the magazine until we had someone who could give it the attention it deserves. The fact you're reading this now is thanks to our South Australian Representative, Darren, who stepped up. Thanks, mate—much appreciated.

Advocacy

We continue to represent you through multiple forums as part of DVA's National Consultation Framework. This is your chance to be heard so please send through your concerns and we will raise them to ensure your issues are heard at the highest levels within DVA and with the Minister for Veterans' Affairs.

Our efforts regarding medallion recognition and retrospective classification of service are also continuing, led by our resident expert and Life Member, Mr Paul Copeland OAM. Paul's passion for achieving the best possible outcomes for peacekeepers is to be commended.

Our advocates are busy supporting members' claims to DVA, although they are always looking for additional support. If you have the ability and interest to become an advocate and help others, please reach out.

ADF Deaths in Training Memorial

We're proud to be progressing a nationally significant memorial to honour all Australian Defence Force

personnel who have lost their lives in training. After sustained lobbying, we've secured approval from the National Capital Authority for a prominent position on Anzac Parade, pending final design approval by the National Monuments Committee—an important milestone.

With this approval in place, we're now moving into a critical consultation phase to inform the design. This will involve respectful and thoughtful engagement with families, veterans, and ADF members who have lost loved ones and mates, ensuring their voices help shape a monument that reflects their expectations and experiences. The aim is to create something of enduring significance—dignified, meaningful, and truly representative of those who died while training to serve our nation.

Peacekeeper Return Program

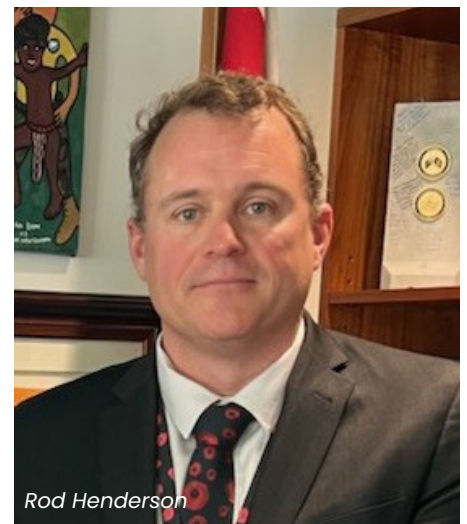
We're in the early stages of planning a return trip to Namibia, with a documentary on our UNTAG veterans nearing completion. That said, it won't feel complete until we can get our members back on the ground to reconnect with the place where they helped bring about lasting peace. Current global uncertainty is likely to make this endeavour challenging. We're also forecasting a return trip to East Timor in 2029 for the 30th anniversary of INTERFET, with more details to come.

Fundraising Dinner at the AWM

Tickets for our fundraising dinner at the Australian War Memorial on 12 September are now on sale. The event will be MC'd by Mark Beretta OAM, with the keynote address delivered by the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK AC (Mil) CVO MC (Retd). The evening will celebrate the opening of the new Peacekeeping Galleries while also raising much-needed funds to support our programs and events. I encourage you to watch the website and secure your spot when they are available. Tickets will be on sale soon.

Merchandise

We now have a range of APPVA-branded shirts and hats available,



Rod Henderson

along with our Peacekeeper coffee—made from beans sourced from regions where our peacekeepers have served. The apparel is made to order, so please allow up to three weeks for delivery, but I assure you it's worth the wait.

General business

We're still facing challenges filling a number of vacant roles, particularly claims advocates and other key positions within APPVA. If you've been thinking about getting more involved, I'd strongly encourage you to check out the positions vacant section on our website and see where you might be able to help.

To help keep everyone informed, we've also launched a new website and membership portal. I appreciate your patience as we work through the inevitable teething issues—we will get there.

We've still got a long way to go, but there are exciting times ahead. Please keep sending through your ideas and concerns via email at ceo@peacekeepers.asn.au. I want every member to feel they have a voice in shaping our association.

Lastly, I hope you all have a meaningful ANZAC Day, commemorating the extraordinary efforts of those who went before us and acknowledging the outstanding service of those who continue to serve today. Please also take a moment to recognise your own service and sacrifice. It is your day to be proud of all that has been achieved, as your service forms part of that legacy.

Cheers

Rod Henderson

CEO APPVA

Rod.henderson@peacekeepers.asn.au

WHY ANZAC DAY MATTERS

We're not glorifying war, we're remembering its human cost

Major Duncan Anderson pictured with Major Joanne Wilson after they were awarded commendations for work keeping Western Australians safe during COVID as part of Joint Task Group 629.6. A Battery Commander of 3 Battery (9th Regiment, Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery) at Irwin Barracks in Perth, Anderson is also a farmer from Donnybrook in the South West of WA.



Anzac Day incorporates dawn vigils, Anzac Day means two seemingly contradicting things to Australians: it's either a public holiday (a rare chance to sleep in), or, for others, it's a day of deep remembrance, gathering at the crack of dawn, rosemary and poppies pinned to jackets, to honour acts of valour and all of those who served and sacrificed their lives for our country.

Which one are you? And why does it matter so much?

With 25 April just around the corner, Major Duncan Anderson talks about why it's worth commemorating rather than hitting the snooze button. If you, or someone you know, feels a little disconnected from the meaning behind Anzac Day, this might be the gentle nudge you need.

So, why does it still matter?

Most Australians have a connection to service through family, friends, or their wider community. So if you're not too familiar with Anzac Day, one might say you've been living under a rock. But if we rewind to where it all started, the importance becomes a little clearer.

Why do we wear a sprig of rosemary?

It's the traditional floral symbol of ANZAC Day. As well as being symbolically linked to memory, rosemary grows wild on the Gallipoli peninsula, giving it deep significance to ANZAC Day and those who commemorate it.

In 1915, thousands of young Australians and New Zealanders landed on the shores of Gallipoli as part of an allied campaign to capture the Dardanelles and Constantinople. The goal was to open up a supply route to Russia, weaken the Ottoman Empire, and shift the course of World War I.

Instead, it claimed the lives of over 130,000 soldiers on both sides – including 8,700 Australians and 2,700 New Zealanders.

The campaign tragically failed. But what emerged was something enduring: the Anzac Spirit. “The Anzac Spirit is deeply embedded in Australian cultural heritage and our national identity,” Anderson said. “We have inherited these values of service, courage, mateship, and endurance from the ANZACs.

“Anzac Day commemorations and traditions are one of the many ways we ensure the ANZAC Spirit remains relevant.

The traditions: Coffee with rum and Anzac biscuits

The most iconic tradition is the Dawn Service. And there is a reason for the early morning, which is to mirror the time of the original Gallipoli landing, just before sunrise on April 25, 1915. Australians and New Zealanders gather in silence to reflect and remember those who served us.

It’s a powerful one minute of silence followed by a trumpet sound called The Last Post (something you might remember reverberating through your school’s speaker as a kid). “All people can observe Anzac Day through moments of quiet reflection, watching the sunset or sunrise or wearing a sprig of rosemary,” Anderson said.

Many Australians enjoy a ‘gunfire breakfast’ between the ANZAC Day Dawn Service and mid-morning march. It typically involves rum-laced coffee or tea and is a chance for veterans and community members to enjoy shared camaraderie.

It dates back to at least the 1890s when it was made by British Army soldiers – likely as a warming dash of morale or liquid courage ahead of the day’s battle – and later adopted by Australian and New Zealand forces.

And of course, Anzac biscuits remain a family favourite: sweet, golden and oaty, they’re baked and shared to mark the day, based on the only ingredients available to the ANZACs at the time.

When we commemorate Anzac Day, we’re not glorifying war, we’re remembering its human cost. It might mean getting up early, but you will be standing in solidarity. And yes, there are a few treats in it for you, too.



Members of the 4th Australian Field Ambulance display the contents of their Christmas bilbies, which all included a pipe and food. They are wearing the lids on their heads! Lemnos, December, 1915.



Soldiers of the 4th Battalion AIF having breakfast at the top of Shrapnel Gully, Gallipoli.





ANZAC DAY 2026

SYDNEY

Thousands of Australians take to the streets for Anzac Day marches across the country honoring fallen heroes, veterans and current service members. Anzac Day is a time for all Australians to recognise the more than 2 million people who have served our country in all conflicts, wars and peace operations since 1914. It's also a time to remember the over 103,000 Australians who sacrificed their lives in military and peacekeeping conflicts.

Anzac Day incorporates dawn vigils, marches, memorial services, reunions among members of the armed services and two-up games. It initially commemorated First World War veterans of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps who landed at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915,

It's been a fixture on the national calendar since 1916 when Acting Prime Minister and Minister for Defence George Pearce officially named 25 April as Anzac Day, though it was not yet a public holiday.

The Federal Government had recognised Gallipoli's symbolic importance and organising committees formed spontaneously in every State. These images were taken in our capital cities in 2025.



SYDNEY



SYDNEY



ANZAC DAY 2026



ANZAC DAY
25 APRIL

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Padre's Ponderings

Fide et Fortitudine By Faith & Courage

Jesus said: "And you will hear of wars and rumours of wars. See that you are not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet."

As the drums and clash of wars and potential wars echo around our globe, Autumn in Australia is a time where we pause to reflect on two events. ANZAC Day where we reflect on the sacrifices of those fought and died for us to maintain our way of life in Australia and Easter. Easter is that time where we reflect on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who was crucified on a cross, then rose from the dead so that we have a better way of living on earth and the hope of eternal life in the future.

It was Jesus who taught us that blessed are the peacemakers and spoke of laying down one's life for others. This is seen as the ultimate sacrifice demonstrating the highest form of love, reflecting a divine selfless attitude rather than one of selfish and naked ambition. When visiting the Commonwealth War Graves Cemeteries in France, Belgium and Netherlands, I have been struck by the Cross of Sacrifice which has a bronze longsword affixed to it, this symbol links the sacrifice of sailors, soldiers and aviators with that of Christ. It does not glorify war but reminds us that there is a greater narrative and that to maintain peace requires sacrifice.

Peacekeepers are often called to walk into harm's way and at times make the ultimate sacrifice – not for their family or friends but for complete strangers and this is indeed an even higher form of sacrificial love.

Outside of war zones, we can live a sacrificial lifestyle where we practice selflessness daily, putting others needs first, being patient and forgiving, practice acts of service and use our time and energy for others. When the motivation is fully for the other, the amazing thing is that the return for us, is contentment, peace, quality mental health and greater spiritual awareness.

May you have a Happy and Holy Easter and reflective and peaceful ANZAC Day.

Godspeed

Steve Neuhaus

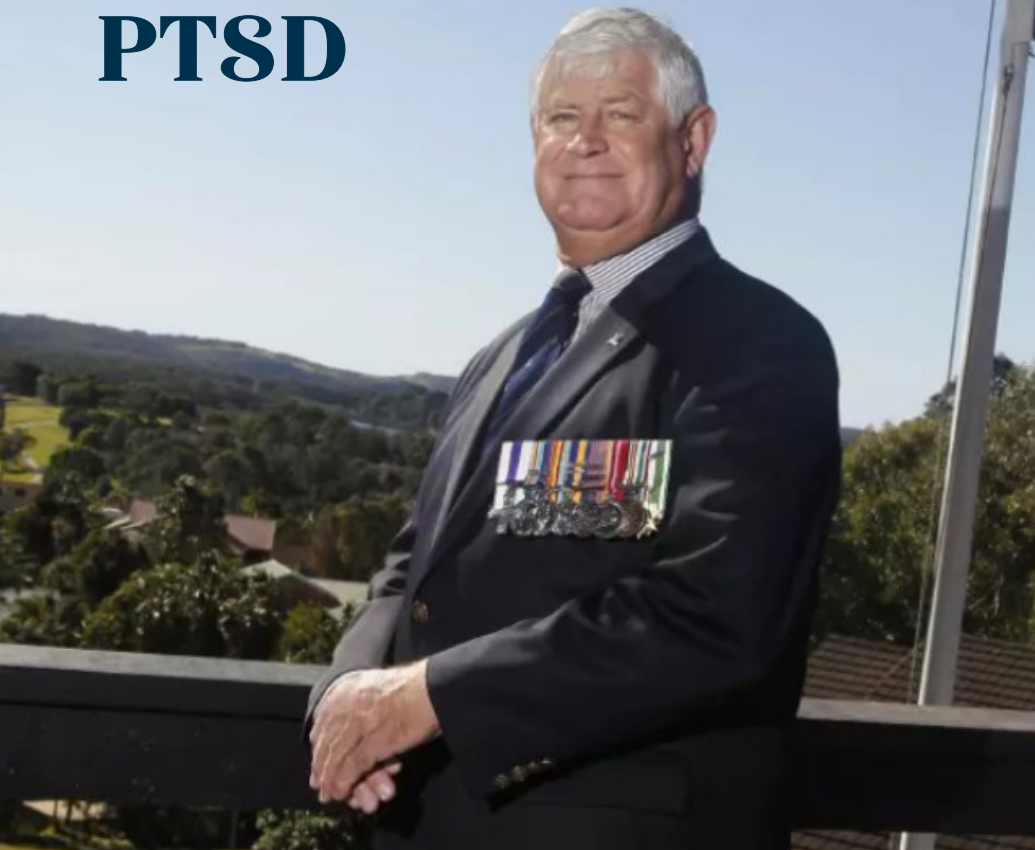
APPVA Chaplain

0403 060 369

P13 Cross of Sacrifice at Ypres Reservoir Cemetery



Gary McKay and his battle with PTSD



Our service is a reflection of the dedication and commitment of our founders, Australia's Vietnam Veterans, whose decades long support for their military mates and their families continues unabated.

We are proud to honour their legacy and share their stories, including Gary McKay whose own journey saw him overcome serious physical injuries as well as a battle with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

The nightmares began for the Australian Army veteran, Military Cross recipient and author when he landed in a Vietnamese jail more than 30 years after surviving near fatal gunshot wounds during the Vietnam War.

It was 2004 and he had just returned from leading an organised battlefield tour to Vietnam for fellow veterans when, unknowingly, his own battle with PTSD began. "The correct visa had not been organised for us to travel to sensitive sites and as a result, the interpreter and I were thrown into jail at gunpoint.

"We had a 19-year-old guard with an AK-47 who kept his finger on the trigger."

After his release and eventual return to Australia, the wartime memories came flooding back. The retired Lieutenant Colonel who had been conscripted to the Australian Army in 1968 always considered his 30-year military career as 'cathartic' when it came to Vietnam.

Especially when it came to the event that almost took his life.

It was 1971 and the 23-year-old 4RAR Rifle Platoon Commander was nearly at the end of his active duty. His bravery in the Battle of Nui Le had seen him awarded the Military Cross for gallantry.

It was in the aftermath of the battle during Operation Ivanhoe, when Gary sustained gunshot wounds, just millimetres from his head.

"We were outnumbered 10 to 1. I ended up getting shot twice in the shoulder and became the last Australian soldier wounded in action in Vietnam.

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We are here 365 days of the year to provide free military-aware and trauma informed care to veterans, current serving ADF personnel and their immediate families. Call us 24/7 on **1800 011 046**.

"That honour definitely wasn't on my bucket list.

"My shoulder had been shattered by the AK-47 rounds and I had to spend all night in the bunker system before they could get me out. If it wasn't for the company medic Mick Sullivan I would have bled to death."

Gary didn't realise that this near-death experience in 1971 and his

time in a Vietnamese jail would collide and become his trigger point for developing PTSD. "After I came back to Australia in 2004, the horrific nightmares began. For 14 nights straight my bed was wet with sweat, I was screaming and yelling out.

"I went to the Vietnam Veterans' Counselling Service (now Open Arms) for help and after determining my eligibility for support, they referred me to a doctor who specialised in treating veterans and first responders.

"He told me I had PTSD and it had been triggered by not being in control of the situation in jail. I didn't believe him. I thought, I'm a hero, I'm too tough for that.'

After having a full-blown panic attack, the doctor referred him to a clinical psychologist who was

married to a veteran. After three to four months I was down to weekly visits. Dr Bob helped me to build a bridge to get to the other side."

In honour of his fellow Vietnam Veterans, Gary has written several books about the war, including his own autobiography – *In Good Company: One Man's War in Vietnam*.

"Through my own experiences with PTSD I became more aware of the psychological struggles of war and the effect on veterans. I used to think these blokes with PTSD were only after a pension.

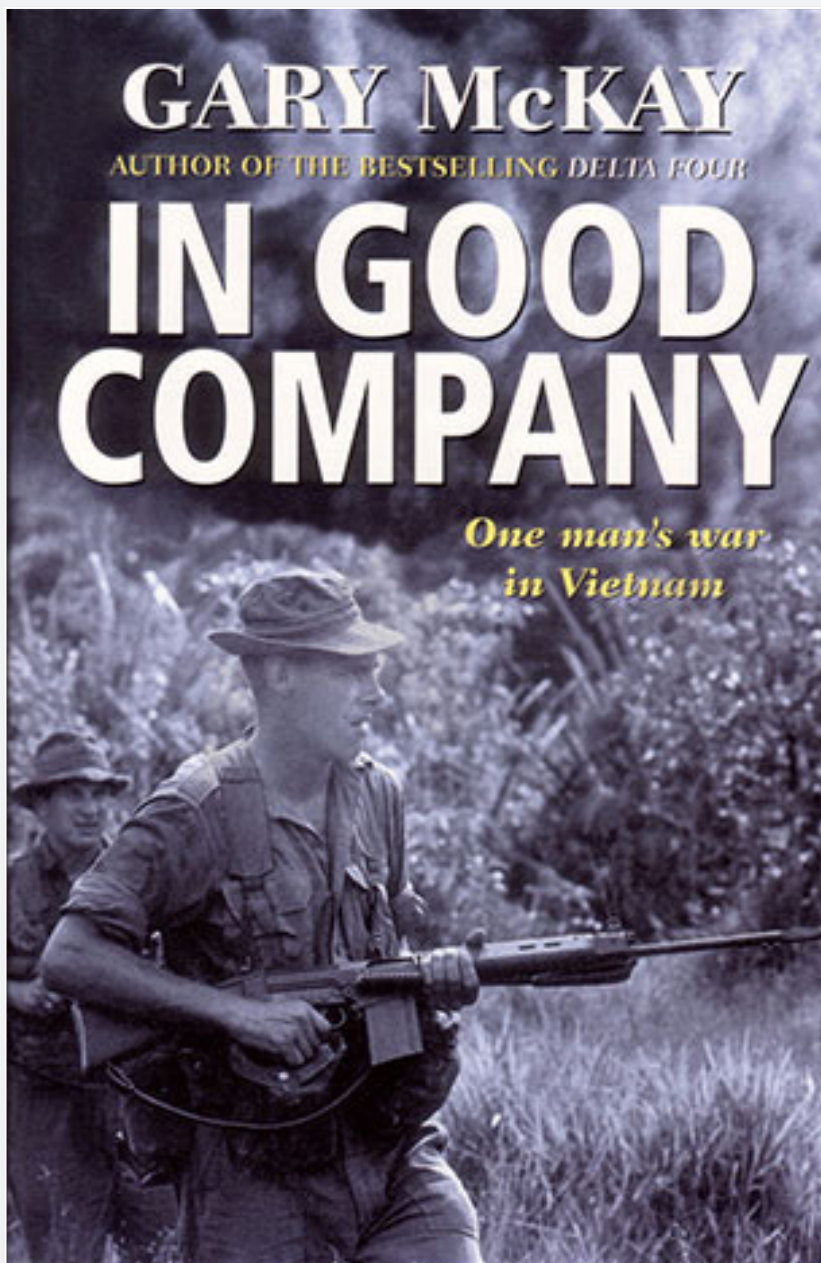
"If you are putting people in harm's way, you are going to have to look after them when they come back. PTSD is a normal reaction when people are put in an unreal environment where they are killing

people or seeing people killed. No-one can expect them to remain unaffected. They need support."

Over the years, the President of the Kiama-Jamberoo RSL sub-branch has worked tirelessly to chronicle and transcribe the experiences of Vietnam Veterans for the Australian War Memorial. "I could talk to them with empathy because I'd been there and knew what they'd been through."

He reflects on how lucky he has been in his life and is grateful for the good place he is in now. "I just turned 78 but in my mind I am only 55 because I should have died in 1971.

For free, military-aware mental health support for veterans and their immediate family, contact Open Arms day or night at 1800 011 046.



Gary McKay MC was awarded the Military Cross while serving with the 4th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment during the Vietnam War. He later served as Commanding Officer of 8th/9th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment between 1988 and 1990.

McKay wrote his first book – *In Good Company* – in 1983. The book is an autobiographical account of his service in Vietnam. Other books written by McKay include *Delta Four: Australian Riflemen in Vietnam* and *Tracy*, about the impact of Cyclone Tracy on Darwin in 1974.

I used to think these blokes with PTSD were only after a pension.



SOUTH AUSTRALIA

darren.hassan@peacekeepers.asn.au

We are pleased to officially welcome Dr Darren Hassan as the newly appointed South Australian Representative for APPVA.

Darren brings a wealth of experience and dedication to this role. He proudly served as a Gunner from 1986 to 1995, fulfilling roles both on the Gunline and as a Forward Observer Signaller in the Regular Army and ARES. Since transitioning from service, Darren has built a diverse career, spanning management consulting and operating hospitality businesses across Asia.

He holds an MBA and a Doctorate in Business Administration and is also the author of a book on Corporate Sustainability Reporting, where

he shared a candid and critical perspective on the topic.

Now semi-retired and classified as TPI, Darren channels his energy into his personal passions including motorcycles and travel, which he humorously refers to as his 'midlife crisis' and is actively encouraged by his wife of over 20 years. He also teaches Taekwondo (4th Dan), where he continues to enjoy seeing the positive transformation martial arts can bring to individuals of all ages.

Darren is genuinely enthusiastic about contributing to the APPVA and looks forward to representing and supporting our members throughout South Australia. You will be seeing more of him at local events and



Dr Darren Hassan

initiatives as he steps into this important role.

For those in SA who would like to get in touch with Darren directly, he can be reached via email. Finally, a reminder to all members, if you are interested in volunteering, nomination emails for current vacancies were sent out recently. If you didn't receive the notice, please contact me directly.

Warm regards,

rod.henderson@peacekeepers.asn.au



Healthy Heart at the Devonport Vietnam Veterans Memorial Park

Tasmanian APPVA took part in two DVA sponsored Healthy Heart pursuits in February as part of Veterans' Health Week.

It started with a special activity at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra bringing together our members and visitors from the Lara RSL Sub-Branch for a fantastic afternoon.

The second was a wonderful day with 25 veterans (plus one special four-legged Border Collie mate!)

coming together for our Veterans' Treasure Hunt at Devonport's beautiful Vietnam Veterans Memorial Park.

The Devonport event was full of fun and camaraderie, with plenty of Peacekeeper & War Memorial related prizes up for grabs. A big thank you to the team @jbrehab_cbr for generously donating their time to speak with attendees about the range of services available to veterans for service-related injuries.

TASMANIA

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APPVA sincerely thanks our member Warrick Butterworth OAM, for helping organise the event, Australian Government Department of Veterans' Affairs for sponsorship and the @awmemorial for hosting us. It was a wonderful opportunity to connect, celebrate, and support the wellbeing of our veteran community.

Under clear skies and perfect weather, our group spent 2.5 hours exploring five different stages around Aikenhead Point, supported by two fantastic Exercise Physiologists from REVIVE. Highlights included walking the Norfolk Island Pine Avenue of Honour and that reminded us the importance of staying active, connected, and remembering those who served.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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Perth March down St George's Tce

Perth's Anzac Day begins with the Kings Park Dawn Service (5:45 AM – 7:00 AM) followed by the Gunfire Breakfast (7 AM – 9 AM) at Government House Gardens, where

you will find coffee with a dash of rum – a nod to the traditional “gunfire” mix shared by soldiers – plus a traditional Anzac Day breakfast. The march begins at 9AM sharp from the corner

of Barrack Street and St Georges Terrace in the CBD.

Not far away at Mateship Lane in Irwin Street between 9am – 3pm, there's a lively community space beside Anzac House featuring a licensed bar, live entertainment, Two-Up, seating areas, and casual food offerings.

Come together with mates, family, and the wider community to connect, reflect, and enjoy the ANZAC spirit of camaraderie in the heart of the city. There are many more events throughout the day including Anzac House, The March and the Cathedral Service and the commemoration doesn't have to be formal.

VALE, GARY MANSFIELD

Gary Mansfield, who died suddenly on March 17, was known as the General of the By-laws by his fellow veteran mates while his wife Marie called him a real gentleman and her hero.

On one memorable ANZAC Day in the late 1990s, a hundred veterans marched through Albury under a banner most locals had never seen, the Albury Wodonga United Nations Association. Gary Mansfield built the framework that put them there.

Gary served on Operation Cedilla with MINURSO in the Western Sahara. When he came home, no organisation existed for veterans of UN operations in regional Australia. No banner to march behind. No place at the table for the blue beret generation.

In 1995, Gary and two fellow veterans set about fixing that. He wrote the AWUNA constitution from scratch, organised the first AGM, and held the Treasurer's portfolio with a discipline that earned him a name the

association never let go; the General of the By-laws.

On 24 October 1997, United Nations Day, the AWUNA framework became the foundation of the APPVA's Victorian branch. What three veterans had started in a border town now covered the state.

Gary never left the Wodonga RSL. His father signed him up in 1975 while Gary was still serving...social membership only, the rules back then. He transferred to Wodonga in the mid-1990s and stayed close to thirty years as Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, Committeeman and Life Member.

He insisted the APPVA lay a wreath on every day that mattered, ANZAC Day, Australian Peacekeeping Day, UN Day, Vietnam Veterans Day, National Service Day. If there was a cenotaph and a date, Gary made sure someone stood there.

Lest we forget

Rod Hutchings



ANZAC SPIRIT SHAPED OUR IDENTITY

On Anzac Day, we mark the landings in Gallipoli of Australian and New Zealand Army Corps soldiers in 1915, and commemorate all our personnel who served and died in wars, conflicts and peacekeeping operations.

We reflect on their courage, discipline and self-sacrifice. This year marks the 111th anniversary of the Gallipoli campaign. The Anzac spirit lives on in the hearts and minds of all Australians as we acknowledge the courage and sacrifice of those who contributed so much to shaping the identity of Australia.

Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel across Australia and serving around the world will commemorate Anzac Day through dawn services and commemorative services. In Australia, ADF personnel will support the Australian War Memorial services as well as services in each capital city and dozens of smaller cities and towns.

Overseas, ADF personnel will also support services at Gallipoli in Türkiye, Villers-Bretonneux in France, as well as services in the Middle East and across the Indo-Pacific.



Lord Kitchener (left) visited the positions at Helles, Suvla and Anzac to assess the situation before giving the go-ahead for evacuation.



Anzac 1st Battalion troops waiting near Jacob's Trench for relief by 7th Battalion in August 1915.



Anzacs: Mates Above All



Australian water carriers from the 6th Battery at Gallipoli



The first-Anzac Day Parade at Brisbane in 1916



Destiny beckons. In the company of his mates, but alone with his thoughts, each man prepares for what lies ahead. Such as these lads from Tapawera at the top-end of New Zealand's South Island.



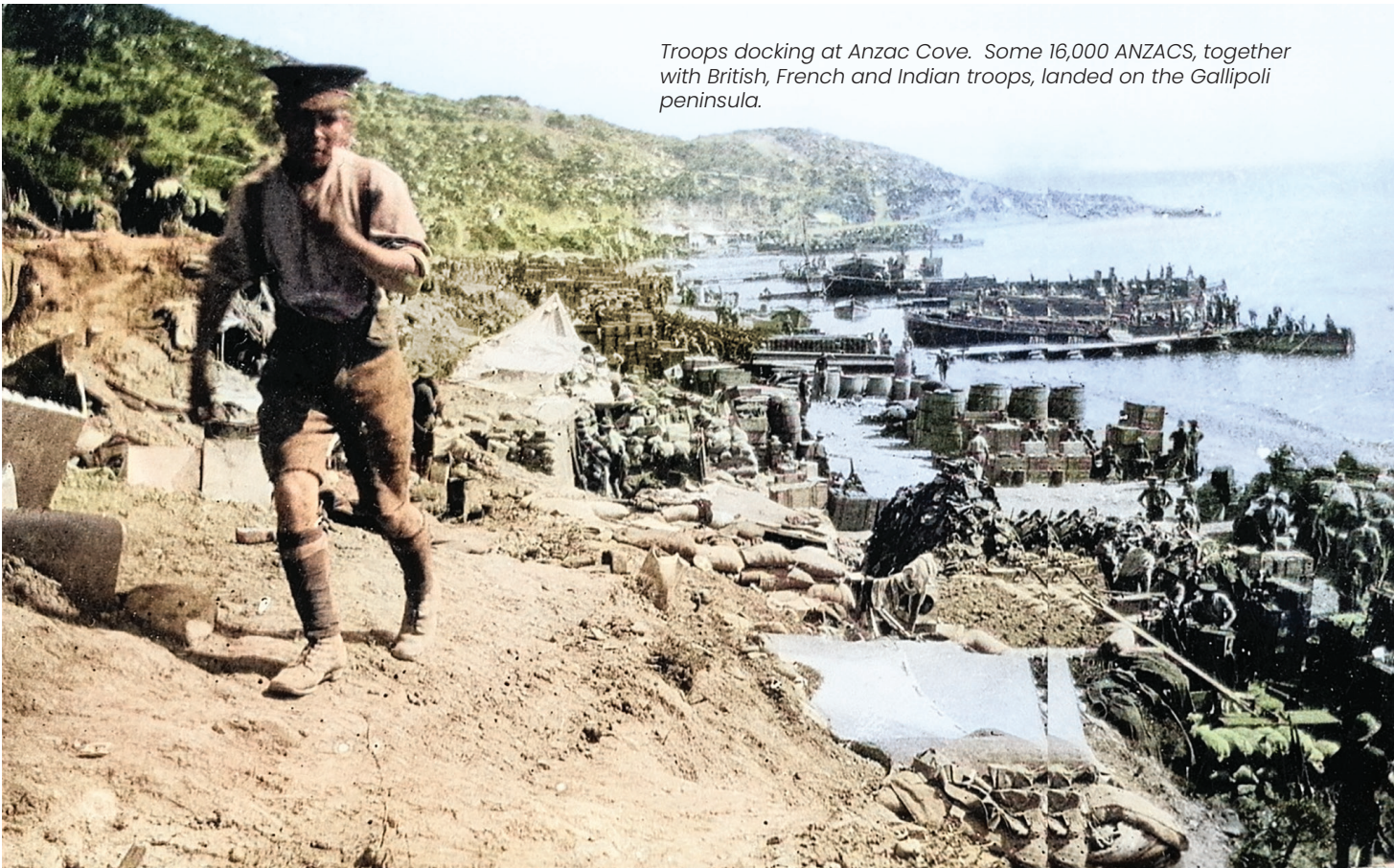
The 10th Battalion on the deck of HMS Prince of Wales, 24 April 1915, as it leaves Mudros Harbour on its way to the Gallipoli landings.



Soldiers of the 4th Battalion AIF at the top of Shrapnel Gully in Gallipoli having breakfast from their dixies just behind the battalion lines.



The Quick Firing (QF) 18 Pounder was the principal Field Gun of the British Army. It was towed by a team of six light draught horses and the calibre and shell weight made it most destructive.



Troops docking at Anzac Cove. Some 16,000 ANZACS, together with British, French and Indian troops, landed on the Gallipoli peninsula.





The Ben Roberts-Smith case highlights...

Unjust pursuit of special forces

By Joel Fitzgibbon

As Anzac Day draws near, our thoughts turn to all who serve or have served. Especially those who sacrificed their lives for our nation, and all those who still live with the consequences of war. Including Ben Roberts Smith.

Tragically, our most decorated living veteran, who was awarded the Medal for Gallantry in 2006 and the Victoria Cross in 2011, is reflecting in a jail cell. Whatever the strengths or otherwise of the prosecution's case, he should not be locked up and someone needs to facilitate his release.

It's a tragedy, one largely created by journalistic activism and reactive overreach on the part of those who've been intensely and relentlessly pressured to respond to the activism.

How welcome it would be if just a fraction of the hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars spent pursuing our war heroes was invested



Below centre: Ben Roberts-Smith receives the Victoria Cross



Joel Fitzgibbon was Labor minister for defence from 2007 to 2009 and was the member for the seat of Hunter in NSW from 1996 to 2022.

in securing justice for Australians killed in action or in service, like Private Robbie Poate, Lance Corporal Rick Milosevic and Sapper James Martin.

They were murdered in cold blood while playing cards on base in southern Afghanistan. Shot by Sergeant Hekmatullah, an Afghan National Army soldier who was supposed to be fighting on our side.

Despite being arrested, tried, jailed, and sentenced to death, Hekmatullah remains a free man, released with hundreds of

other Taliban prisoners under a deal between the US and the Taliban. Australia lost 42 young men in Afghanistan. There is no justice for any of their families either, even though the Taliban's tactics were rarely consistent with the laws of conflict.

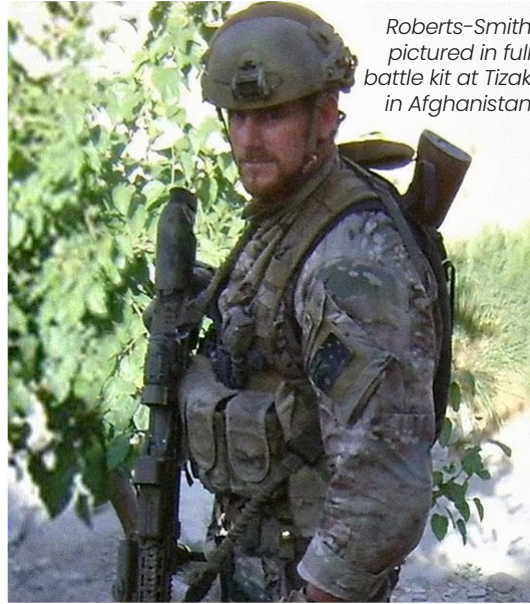
Neither is there any justice for the 20 or more Australian special forces soldiers who have been living with the fear of prosecution for the past six years. That's a lot of sleepless nights for our combat soldiers.

Yes, they are tough. Those who pass the ultra-challenging selection course to become a special forces soldier must overcome extraordinary physical and mental tests. In effect, the army melts them down and rebuilds them into young men capable of the teamwork, mutual trust and the mental toughness needed to deploy lethal force when necessary.

But as impressive and professional as the army's training and preparation processes are, and no matter how tough and skilled our frontline soldiers are, there is a limit to their mental resilience.

In Afghanistan, we tested that limit and we are testing it again now. As the Afghanistan conflict dragged on, we took our special forces soldiers away from their families more often and for longer periods. They were sent to hell to fight an enemy that respected none of the rules we do. Not domestic law, not international law.

Unlike our boys, enemy combatants were not constrained by any rules of engagement. The perpetrators of war crimes in Afghanistan were the Taliban, yet they go unpunished.



Roberts-Smith pictured in full battle kit at Tizak in Afghanistan

Our enemy wore no uniform, which made it hard to be sure who was a threat and who was not. Who to trust and who not to trust. Having risked their lives to capture them, our soldiers too often went on subsequent raids only to find they were capturing the same combatants again. This was just one consequence of NATO's "catch and release" policy, which released captured insurgents who were not considered senior enough to matter.

After putting their lives on the line for their country for years, and achieving everything we asked of them, our battle-fatigued soldiers no doubt started to question whether overall strategic success was possible.

The mission objectives kept changing, strategy seemed vague and the global community was questioning the merits of the International Security Assistance Force's intervention. Shades of Vietnam. None of these challenges and setbacks justifies behaviour not consistent with our legal frameworks and those who have done wrong should expect to be held to account. That is the standard we set for ourselves as a wealthy developed nation.

But our troops were operating in complex counterinsurgency environments, fighting an enemy too willing to win by any means, including the deployment of improvised explosive devices and the use of children as combatants and human shields.

In these environments, it is difficult to judge if, and when, a line has been crossed. Defamation proceedings brought by Roberts Smith confirmed that. In the fog of war, one person's memory and account of an event will differ from the account of another.



Ben Roberts-Smith meets with Queen Elizabeth II at Buckingham Palace

The government-funded Office of the Special Investigator may have new evidence; we shall see. They will need it because it's unlikely they will achieve a verdict beyond reasonable doubt relying only on the witnesses and evidence presented in the defamation proceedings. Regardless, in this case most Australians would say the test should be "beyond any doubt".

Of course, it will be years before we know what the OSI's enthusiastic, energetic and relentless work has produced. It will be a long wait for Roberts-Smith, who of course remains innocent until proven otherwise. Justice delayed is justice denied. Let's not forget.

Let Us contribute to Peace NOT WAR



By Padre Gary Stone OAM

In being invited to write for the Peacekeepers Magazine, it seems timely to reflect on the foundations of peace in light of escalating conflict in the Middle East.

Many hold strong opinions about current events but few have on the ground experience or strategic insight into this complex region. My hope is to offer perspective on the background to the present crisis and the immense challenge the world faces in restoring a peace that requires not only the cessation of violence, but also justice, freedom, and renewed relationships.

I write from 24 years as an infantry officer – including strategic employment in the ADF Command Centre during the 1991 Gulf War – and a further 24 years as a Padre.

I have witnessed seven conflicts, including deployment to Iran and Iraq in 1989 – 90 commanding the Australian contingent implementing a UN brokered ceasefire. I have also undertaken study trips to the region and maintained contact with people there for 40 years.

Like many readers, I am proud to have served as both a Peacemaker and Peacekeeper. Australians have excelled in these roles and earned respect in UN and multinational missions.

Equally, I was prepared to be a war-fighter when necessary to defend our nation. My training reinforced that force must be used only as

a last resort, always humanely, lawfully, and with the restoration of peace as the ultimate aim.

Today, Israeli and US bombs and missiles are pounding Iran and Lebanon in a relentless campaign which, in the words of US Secretary of War Pete Hegseth, “will show no mercy, nor follow rules of engagement.”

President Trump demands unconditional surrender and regime change in Iran. God must weep at what humanity has become. Ironically, this campaign is uniting disparate groups within Iran in resentment, resistance, and retaliation.

As a veteran and student of the art of war and peace, I despair that rules based order, international law, and the principles of “just war” have been disregarded by the governments of our closest ally and of Israel.

Leaders in both nations have acted unilaterally, without consensus from other free nations and without any sustainable, peaceful end state in mind. Their actions are causing immense suffering to innocents, provoking a “hornets’ nest” response from Iran, and destabilising the global economy through disruption of energy supplies.

This tragedy is part of a long saga of Western meddling, incompetence and catastrophe. The establishment of Israel in 1948 displaced hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and enraged the region.

In 1953, when Iran’s democratically elected government sought to reclaim its oil industry, the CIA staged a coup and installed a US controlled Shah whose repression fuelled resentment and ultimately the 1979 revolution.

Soon after, Saddam Hussein invaded Iran – supported by billions in US funding and weapons – to seize Iranian oil fields. Iranian students later uncovered extensive CIA files detailing torture, assassinations, and corruption. I have seen these documents in Tehran; I do not doubt their authenticity.

Iranians have endured decades of foreign interference. While many despair of their current fundamentalist government, this did not stop them fighting doggedly for eight years against Iraq’s unjust invasion, suffering one million casualties.

A UN brokered ceasefire in 1988 eventually led to UNIIOMOG’s deployment, where we helped facilitate a transition to peace that largely endured until now.

The US in 2002 turned its attention to Iraq. In January 2003, while serving at HQ 7 Brigade, I published an article urging our government not to participate in the expected invasion of Iraq on strategic and ethical grounds.

I warned it would lead to catastrophic outcomes. The invasion proceeded, and the consequences

were even worse than expected: hundreds of thousands killed, and the Middle East plunged into anarchy and civil war.

I resigned from the Regular Army in protest.

Rereading that article today, I am struck by how thoroughly the “just war” doctrine – central to Australian military strategy for a century – has been abandoned by our US ally. Just war principles require that war be a last resort, undertaken only when grave danger is imminent and all other means have failed.

Any action must be discriminate, proportionate, have serious prospects of success, and must not produce evils greater than those it seeks to eliminate.

During my time in Iran, I found most Iranians to be sophisticated, peace loving people who desire independence. I do not see them capitulating to whatever Israel and the US now unleash, nor do I see any realistic prospect of regime change.

President Trump’s call for Iranians to take to the streets can only lead to more deaths at the hands of the Revolutionary Guards. History shows that evolution is far less costly than violent revolution.

Australian born strategist Dr David Kilcullen, in *The Art of War and Peace*, highlights the folly of believing Western nations can impose their way of life on Third World societies through overwhelming violence.

He argues for “winning peace” by aligning diplomatic, economic, and military efforts toward achievable outcomes and avoiding unwinnable conflicts – something the US has repeatedly failed to do.

We may feel powerless to stop the current insanity, but we can refuse to endorse such behaviour. We can pray for peace, promote dialogue, and ensure we are not dragged into offensive operations. Knowing the Iranians as I do, there will be no “unconditional surrender.”

Their honour and national identity are at stake and they will resist what they see as Western imperialism.



The Iranian standing with me was an intelligence officer who had been surveilling me and subsequently thanked me for my service there in the service of peace

I am grateful that Pope Leo has called for a cessation of hostilities and a return to dialogue. Many Australians may believe the current campaign protects us, but what we are witnessing goes far beyond what is right or reasonable.

The US and Israel have entered this conflict without a long term strategy, and the whole world is suffering the consequences. Unlimited war is not the solution.

One of my most treasured possessions is a Christian cross given to me by an Iranian intelligence officer who said, “We now know you are our true brother in the family of God.”

Peace with Iranians is possible. Let us pray for peace and advocate strongly for our government to uphold international law and promote peaceful solutions. May our society unite for peaceful resolution and informed dialogue. May Jesus, the Prince of Peace, guide our actions as we strive to be peacemakers.

Australian contingent to Iran with Garry Stone front-row, fourth from left



Decision Making & Leadership in Extremis

By Travis Robinson
LCDR Royal Australian Navy



Lieutenant Commander Travis Robinson was the successful applicant to be chosen to deploy on Operation Paladin, the ADFs contribution to the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation. His role was to observe, monitor, report and investigate violations of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1701 along the border of Lebanon and Israel otherwise known as the 'Blue-Line'.

It wasn't the first time LCDR Robinson demonstrated outstanding leadership qualities and core values. Prior to the incident of 30 March 2024, he had already demonstrated dedication and support to the team members. Considering the difficulties of the Area of Operations after 07 October 2023, the changes and challenges that the Team and himself had to experience and overcome has been immense.

I was deployed on Operation Paladin in July 2023 and assigned to Observer Group Lebanon (OGL) as an unarmed UN Military Observer (UNMO). This is the ADFs contribution to the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation (UNSTO), where for the last 76 years UNMOs from Australia have been observing, monitoring and reporting on violations against the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701.

On 30 March 2024, five months after the Israel-Hamas-Hezbollah war started, I made a plan to conduct a patrol to observe an area on the Lebanon - Israel border. Due to the tensions and sensitivities I had spent a number of days planning and liaising with numerous UN organisations, Israeli Defence Force and local assets.

My team and I were confident that we had exhausted every measure to ensure the safety of the patrol. At approximately 0845 on the 30 March 24, Team Victor, comprising two armoured 4WDs, four UNMOs and an interpreter made our way to the designated area.

The road was blocked around that area due to damage caused by an airstrike, so we made the collective decision that we would exit the vehicles and proceed on foot the few hundred meters to the site. I was to lead the foot patrol, followed by an UNMO from Norway and Chile, with the Swiss UNMO staying with the vehicles.

Approximately 100m along the path, an explosion occurred critically injuring the three of us. I was blown to the ground, having numerous large fragmentation impacts to my helmet and body armour as well as wounds to my face, shoulder, arm, flank and leg. Not to mention instantly rendered deaf in my left ear and disorientated.

On the ground, I went through years of training...self-aid...buddy aid...medic aid. Am I safe? Is the scene safe? Are there other survivors? I checked myself for major haemorrhage, then found my radio and sent the 'MAYDAY'.

Team Victor: "Lima this is Victor, we are self-evacuating to UN Position 2-45, multiple casualties, have security keep front gate open and stand up the trauma team"

I could start to see my colleagues through the smoke and debris and unsteadily made my way to the UNMO from Norway. He was peppered with shrapnel and bleeding, also deaf and had a broken arm, but at first glance no life threatening injuries.

Despite numerous injuries, the Norwegian UNMO had to drive back to the UN Position, firstly reversing 300m down a track with landmines either side.

I then heard my other UNMO from Chile call my name. Through the smoke and debris, I saw she could not stand without falling. I moved towards her and when I saw her wounds and burns, my heart sank.

I knew straight away she would need surgery. If we waited for a CASEVAC (Casualty Evacuation) it would be over an hour just to get to us but she needed urgent stabilisation.

I treated the Chilean on the back seat of the car. She kept losing consciousness which prompted me to check for things that I may be missing, subsequently removing her clothing and conducting further sweeps. Not an easy thing to do squeezing into the footwell between the front and rear seat on my knees so I could treat her in the back of a moving car.

As the Team and Patrol Leader, I made the decision that even though injured, the team would have to conduct a self-rescue and I would have to treat both my colleagues as best as I could on the move.

Within minutes I had exhausted the team's medical supplies and then became acutely aware of my own injuries. I continued to treat both casualties as best as I could given the confines and lack of supplies, as well as providing MIST updates over the VHF so the trauma team was ready for our arrival.

The Swiss UNMO and the LA who were uninjured (LA can't drive) had to take the older and slower 4x4 and try and keep up with 4WDs. Meanwhile, the adrenalin must have worn off a bit and I became acutely aware of the shrapnel sticking out of my left shoulder which caused me a slight panic and I almost passed out.

Nevertheless, that's when I remembered the medics I worked with while posted to the 2nd Commando Regt emphasising the importance of the tactical pause/ breathe while under pressure. That two-second slow and deep inhalation and pursed lip exhalation refocused me immensely and I went back to treating my friends. About 20 minutes later we arrived at our patrol base and raced through the security gate.



LCDR Travis Robinson with Australian Peacekeepers Director & Company Secretary Mark Horner

The trauma team came and took the Chilean UNMO to the one trauma bay for emergent treatment. She was stabilised and flown by UN helicopter to Beirut for surgery, no mean feat considering there had been no helicopters flying for months due to the sheer amount of kinetic activity.

Meanwhile, the Norwegian and I were loaded into an armoured ambulance and moved by armoured convoy 2 hours to a local Lebanese hospital for further scans and treatment. Subsequent to that and my worsening condition, I was medically repatriated home by the RAAF. And that was the end of my mission, nine months after it had begun.

A UN Investigation concluded my patrol was injured by an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) that had been planted next to the road and initiated by a trip wire. Luckily, the other three devices found did not initiate due to a faulty initiator. Had they initiated, it was found that it would have been fatal to all in the patrol.

From the time the explosion initiated to the time the patrol made it back the patrol base, it felt like an out of body experience. I was doing things instinctively. I didn't have to think about the plan or clinical interventions. I was doing as they had been drilled in for years and felt seemingly autonomous.

But that's exactly what should happen and is exactly why we drill repetitively so when it does happen it doesn't feel like it's the first time and unnatural. We obviously can't drill for exactly what happened to me but we can and should drill under duress.

None of us, enlisted or commissioned are ever immune from danger, and I hope this story serves a lesson to never be complacent. I'm happy to be here telling you my story. After being flown home by the RAAF, and upgraded for duty, I was awarded the Medal for Battle Wounds from the Government of Lebanon and it was presented by Commodore Eric Young.

Labor sells Defence Assets

The Federal Government's plan to sell off more than 60 Defence assets in a multi-billion-dollar proposal has raised serious concerns about the effect of a diminishing Defence presence from our cities.

One property developer has reportedly already offered \$5 billion for the entire Australia-wide portfolio.

Now that the defence land has been declared surplus to needs, it will go to the Department of Finance's Property Clearing House. This process allows other government departments to buy a site before it is sold on the open market.

Former Labor Prime Minister Paul Keating has joined the chorus of voices opposed to the sale including former Liberal PM John Howard. The federal opposition has also criticised the divestment as a fire sale.

"It vandalises the national estate," Keating told the Financial Review. "Some of these properties are gems. Defence holds these properties, not as operating assets - they have long fallen out of military use - but holds them in virtual trust on behalf of the nation.

"In an operating sense, they don't belong to Defence to do anything with, including their sales.

"This ploy is a current drum-up of what has been attempted in the past. In the mid-1990s, under pressure to fund portfolio savings, the Department of Defence offered the Government I led, the option of cutting Point Piper-style waterfront blocks off slabs of Garden Island."



Paul Keating /
AAP



*Defence
holds these
properties...in virtual
trust on behalf
of the nation* 

Keating was instrumental in saving another Sydney Harbour site when he championed the restoration and original headland shoreline of Barangaroo, transforming it from a container terminal into a public waterfront reserve.

Major sites for disposal include HMAS Penguin in Mosman on Sydney's lower north shore, RAAF Williams at Melbourne's Point Cook, and the Victoria Barracks in Sydney's Paddington, Brisbane's Petrie Terrace and Melbourne's Southbank.

The Victoria Barracks sales are expected to raise \$1.3 billion, given their prime locations in the biggest capital cities. Redevelopment opportunities are expected to be limited by heritage rules.

Defence Minister Richard Marles released results of an independent review of Defence's sprawling property portfolio - which includes 2.8 million hectares of land in Australia, 70 major bases, 28 airfields, 72 training areas and 61 wharves - to determine which assets it no longer needed.

The Commonwealth has been trying to offload redundant properties for decades, in part because of the cost of maintenance, estimated at around



Richard Marles / ABC

\$100 million each year. “We’re not a heritage organisation, we’re a defence organisation,” Marles said.

“In order for the Australian defence force to protect our nation and keep Australians safe, it must have a defence estate that meets its operational and capability needs. For many years this has not been the case, with many defence sites vacant, decaying, under utilised and costing millions of dollars to maintain.

“Defence personnel absolutely get the argument that spending a whole lot of money on properties which have no benefit to our capability makes no sense. The proceeds from these divestments will be retained within the Defence portfolio, in part to reorient our focus to our northern bases.”

That includes major changes sparked by the AUKUS nuclear submarines agreement.

While the Minister talked up progress being made across sites in the Northern Territory, upgrades to Western Australia’s northern bases are stalling.

Of the \$237 million allocated to upgrade RAAF Base Curtin and RAAF Base Learmonth under the National Airfields Capital Works - Western Australia project, as of October just \$8.16 million had been spent with works not expected to be completed until 2028.

These upgrades are not optional extras. They are central to Australia’s strategy of denial, as outlined in the 2024 National Defence Strategy. That strategy is about deterring conflict before it begins and preventing adversaries from projecting power against Australia through our northern approaches.

The work underway at Learmonth would enable aircraft to launch and refuel in ways that extend their range, allowing the ADF to operate further north than is currently possible and to hold potential adversaries at greater distance.

WA-based Liberal MP Melissa Price also highlighted the effect in erasing a Defence presence from our cities. In Western Australia, that includes the Irwin and Leeuwin Barracks. According to the Government’s own report, they support approximately 1,200 and 400 personnel respectively.

“I believe the last thing we should be doing is selling off assets that directly support the recruitment, training and retention of ADF personnel. As retired Brigadier Ian Langford has said, ‘How do you recruit and retain a workforce that is unable to serve in populated areas?’”

*Spectacle Island in Sydney Harbour was used to store munitions during the first and second world wars.
Jessica Hromas / The Guardian*



Horses of Anzac

By Ruth Speldewind

When the first convoy of ships left our shores with Australian and NZ troops bound for World War 1 battle-grounds, they also held hundreds of horses confined in stalls below decks.

There were four Light Horse regiments on board that convoy that sailed from Albany in November 2014 and a further 16 regiments were sent overseas before the end of hostilities. More than 130,000 horses were also shipped overseas but only one came home.

Horses were crucial to World War 1, for both battle and transport, and the tough Australian war horses, known as Walers, proved themselves more than worthy of the task and became legendary for

their strength and endurance.

Walers were well suited to the desert conditions in the Sinai Campaign and were selected for their ability to carry up to 120kg day after day. Most horses need about 30 litres of water per day but a Waler in the Middle East could survive up to three days without a drink.

They proved to be better than camels for quickly transporting troops to a battle.

The Waler originated from the breeds of horse first brought to early Australia. It was bred for the purposes of the developing colonies which needed a horse able to work and survive in the harsh, new environment.

Over time cross-breeding of pony, draught, coach and saddle breeds led to a uniquely Australian horse. The Waler displayed speed, endurance, hardiness and power, along with gentleness and intelligence.

During the 1800s, Walers were bred to specific requirements for the British Army in India and exported in their thousands. It was during this time that the name 'Waler' was first used, as most horses were bred or exported from New South Wales. By the time of the World War 1, the Waler had already proved itself an excellent military horse both in India and during the Boer War.

When war broke out in 1914, young men from the country, already experienced with horses, were



As well as desert conditions in the Sinai Campaign, Walers could handle mud up to their hocks in the Middle East.



Anzac parade in Albany
Photo / Albany Historical Society

well suited to join the Light Horse regiments which came to hold such an important place in Anzac history.

On the sea journey, the horses were confined in specially built stalls with limited room for exercise. Feeding, grooming and exercising the horses, and cleaning out the stalls, took up much of the men's time. Once in the camps the Lighthorsemen continued to tend their own horses, and spent time training in mounted fighting techniques.

On the battlefields the Lighthorsemen and their mounts earned respect for their bravery and fighting skill. The Australian cavalrymen and their horses, often raised in the Australian bush, were used to surviving on limited supplies of food and water, and skilled at navigating unfamiliar terrain.

Men and horses came to depend on each other for survival, and the bond that developed between them is expressed in many poems and writings of the time. It is not surprising that some famous characters emerged among both men and horses.

One such horse was 'Bill the Bastard' who was the mount of Major Michael Shanahan and he bucked when anyone else tried to ride him. However, at the Battle of Romani in 1916 when Major Shanahan found four troopers

stranded in battle, Bill carried all five men to safety, galloping under fire through soft sand with three on his back and one in each stirrup.

Bill saved the lives of these men and became a legend among the Light Horse brigades, and his courage is commemorated by a statue and plaque at the Australian Light Horse War Memorial in Murrumburrah, NSW.

Most of the Walers sent to World War I perished during that time. Of those that remained, strict quarantine restrictions and the cost of transport prevented their return to Australia. The Lighthorsemen were dismayed at having to leave their horses behind after having endured so much together, and there was deep concern about what would happen to the horses once the soldiers left.

In fact, the horses were examined and classified according to a strict bureaucratic process organised by the Australian government and were either reissued to the British, sold or destroyed if necessary.

The contribution of the horses of World War I is honoured at Memorials around Australia, and the horses are a favourite sight at ANZAC parades each year. The war horses hold a special place in the hearts of Australians and for many they are as much a part of the history as the men themselves.

The Desert Mounted Corps Memorial in Sydney bears this inscription to those gallant steeds: "They suffered wounds, thirst, hunger and weariness almost beyond endurance but never failed. They did not come home. We will never forget them."

Loading Horse by Sling
Photo / Albany Historical Society



ANZAC DAY

LEST WE FORGET

They suffered wounds, thirst, hunger and weariness almost beyond endurance but never failed ”

Commercial breeding of Walers in Australia declined after the First World War as mechanisation replaced the use of horses. However, in 1986 the Waler Horse Society was established to preserve the breed in recognition of its importance to Australian history and today there are around 30 studs breeding Walers.



VETERANS

call for return of national service

The National Service Scheme sent David Webster to war in Vietnam and made him the man he became: a one-star general in the Australian Army; a husband, father and grand-dad in the security of his home life.

He believes the controversial program was the best thing that ever happened to him, and he wants it brought back to shape a new generation of young Australians.

His call, echoing that of former prime minister Tony Abbott, came in February as the nation commemorated the 75th anniversary of the introduction of the conscription scheme, as well as the service of the 280,000 "Nashos" who were called up between 1951 and 1972.

More than 200 of them died on active duty overseas.

Brigadier Webster, 80, volunteered to fight in Vietnam after being drafted in 1965, and never regretted the decision. A junior officer there, leading troops in combat, he transferred to the regular army and rose to the rank of brigadier before retiring in 2011, having spent 45 years in uniform.

"When I've asked the friends I served with whether national service did them any harm, I haven't had anyone say that was the case. Everyone says they received some benefit, and I know I certainly did," he told *The Australian Newspaper*.

"If nothing else, you learned about punctuality, discipline, fitness and mateship. You learned to understand that in order to get things done, you need to be able to work in a team. These are very valuable life lessons."

But his grand-daughter, Georgina, while deeply respectful of his military service, is not sure she would follow in his boot steps if the nation went to war again. "I would be terrified," the 20-year-old medical science student said. "Conscription is definitely taking away your choices and that's not what we are about in Australia."

Admittedly, the proposition Mr Abbott put on the agenda in 2022 envisaged a form of national service that went beyond military conscription, an idea Webster supports. Under the Abbott model, school-leavers

would spend 6 to 12 months "giving something back" to the country through volunteer duty, including in the military.

Working in aged-care homes, Indigenous communities or with the Australian Volunteers Program in the Indo-Pacific were among the options advanced by the former PM.

Former chief of the army Peter Leahy warned last year that conscription could be needed if recruitment to the Australian Defence Force did not lift.

At 20, Webster was in the first national service intake deployed to South Vietnam. As a newly minted second lieutenant, commanding an infantry platoon, he was thrown into the thick of the fighting against the Vietcong militia and North Vietnamese Army troops.

"Which of my soldiers were national servicemen and which were regulars was of no interest to me," he recalled. "They were all Australian soldiers."

Some of his most fraught moments in the war came during the Tet offensive in January-February 1968, after secretly positioned communist forces launched devastating surprise attacks across the country. He was scouting an encampment packed with more than 200 NVA combat engineers when the Australian patrol was discovered and all hell broke loose.

Eight of his 17 men were wounded, two gravely with chest wounds. "I thought the end was nigh," Webster said. "Napalm bomb drops and helicopter gunships were called in to extract his beleaguered troops. Near miraculously, none was lost."

His friend Kel Ryan found a new home in the army after his parents died when he was only 16. He, too, was happy to go to Vietnam. Like Webster, he made a career in the army, retiring in 1988 as a lieutenant colonel.

Cairns-based Ryan, 81, said the reintroduction of national service would be good for the country, but needed to be sold carefully. "We have to get away from the word 'conscription'...that would probably not go down very well at all."





Old mates Lieutenant Colonel Peter Michelson, left, Brigadier Duncan Webster and Lieutenant Colonel Kel Ryan at the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial in Canberra. Picture: David Beach

and family that I was in Vietnam. You would get into an argument straight away."

Brigadier Webster was in distinguished company as a nasho: future deputy prime minister and National Party leader Tim Fischer was an officer in the infantry company that relieved his unit when he rotated back to Australia, while Jeff Kennett, Victorian premier from 1992-99, deployed to Malaysia and Singapore with the army after being conscripted in 1968.

The retired brigadier said military service, while beneficial, also had a downside, which he had invested time and effort in understanding. Not long ago, he came across Department of Veterans' Affairs figures showing that 19,000 of Australia's 35,000-odd surviving Vietnam vets had been issued benefit cards for total or permanent incapacity.

"I do think it's a good thing to do military service, but what I would do is explain to people a bit more about how to identify, manage and treat those who exhibit signs of psychological stress. I think we did that very poorly."

The original National Service Training Scheme, introduced during the Korean War in 1951 by the Robert Menzies Coalition government, required nearly all 18-year-old males to be registered and undergo between three and six months full-time training in the armed forces, followed by part-time service in the defence reserves. It ran until 1959.

With the escalation of the Vietnam War, conscription was reintroduced in 1965 through a ballot system for men turning 20, mandating either two years of full-time service in the army or six years part-time with the then Citizens Military Force.

One of Gough Whitlam's first acts as Labor Prime Minister was to scrap national service in 1972.

<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/vietnam-veteran-and-retired-general-calls-for-return-of-national-service/news-story/8dde135a9d254dc6ca973aaefe3d537a>

"We need to get back to the idea of national service, whether that is purely in the Army, Navy or Air Force, or involves some form of non-military service."

Ian Shepherd, 87, of Freemans Reach, NSW was drafted in 1956 as an 18-year-old. An apprentice instrument maker, the skills he honed working on sonar scanners in the navy opened up a new career back in civilian life. He helped pioneer the development by Australian scientists of world-first ultrasound medical technology.

Rodney O'Reagan, 78, was sent to Vietnam in 1970 when support for the war was waning at home. His job as an army sapper was dirty and especially dangerous, clearing enemy mines and booby traps, often below ground in claustrophobic tunnel and bunker systems.

Sometimes he felt like "mother hen" keeping the infantry safe. "They were relying on us, totally," O'Reagan said. "If you missed a mine or something else, someone would get blown up and die behind you. We were very conscious of that responsibility."

But when he returned to Sydney after his national service was up, O'Reagan didn't like to mention where he had been or what he had done for his country. "I wouldn't tell anyone outside friends



Wally Harris and David Webster looking relieved at the end of a 12-month tour of duty.

UN recognition of ADF Service

By Graham Rayner



About the author

Graham Rayner is a retired public servant with an interest in military history. He served for over ten years on the committee convened to build the national memorial to peacekeeping in Canberra. He has contributed earlier articles on Australia's involvement in Indonesia to *Peacekeeper* and other publications and gives occasional lectures on military history to U3A. This goes hand in hand with the article in *Peacekeepers Winter 2022 Magazine*. Unless otherwise captioned, the Indonesian images are courtesy of National Archives of the Netherlands.

In 2025, 75 years after its operation in Indonesia, the UN indicated its willingness to award the United Nations Special Service Medal to members of the ADF who served the UN as military observers helping to resolve the conflict between the Netherlands and Indonesia over the sovereignty of the Indonesian archipelago.

All 65 officers of the Australian army, navy and air force who served as military observers have since died so it will be members of their families who would appreciate the long overdue recognition that this would bring to those who are eligible.

However, the UN's good intentions have so far not been accepted by the Australian government.

This article tells the story of the UN's involvement in Indonesia, the role that the Australian servicemen played in supporting the UN and the recent campaign to have the UN formally recognise their service.

Indonesian Independence

2025 marked the 80th anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations. In June 1945, the Charter of the United Nations was drafted and signed by representatives from all original 50 member states. The United Nations was officially established on 24th October of that year, following the ratification of the Charter by the governments of 29 nations.

The first meetings of both the General Assembly and the Security Council were held in January 1946, with an Australian government minister – Norman Makin – chairing

the first meeting of the Security Council as its president.

Also 80 years ago, on 17th August 1945, just two days after the Japanese surrender ending the Second World War, the Republic of Indonesia was declared. This was not accepted by the Kingdom of the Netherlands which had ruled the Indonesian archipelago as a colony for nearly 150 years until it had to leave in 1942 when Japan invaded.

The Netherlands, itself recovering after German occupation during the war, requested its wartime allies, principally Britain and Australia, to represent its interests (resume its administration and policing of the colony) until it could return.

Meanwhile, the Indonesian nationalists established their own government for the new republic and resisted any efforts by the Netherlands (or its allies) to re-establish the pre-war Netherlands East Indies.

This resulted in violent conflict, such as that which occurred in Surabaya in late October/early November 1945. The battle of Surabaya left over 700 British and 10,000 Indonesian dead. Despite their defeat, Indonesians see the battle as a key moment in their independence struggle and mark its end on 10 November with Heroes Day, honouring those who died – Indonesia's Anzac Day.

During 1946 the Indonesian republicans attempted to resolve their issues with the government of the Netherlands through dialogue but without success. The Netherlands not only re-established its East Indies Army but deployed

many tens of thousands of Dutch troops from the Netherlands to Indonesia and forcibly re-inserted its pre-war administration into their former colony.

The Dutch had no intention of allowing the republicans to assert their independence and the republicans had no intention of allowing the Dutch to re-subjugate them as a colonial outpost. In early 1947 Indonesia turned to the newly created United Nations for help.

UN becomes involved



Three Chinese members of UNGOC confer, late 1947

In April 1947 the Security Council began to debate the "Indonesian Question", as it was called. Australia was an active supporter of the UN becoming involved and it was through a proposal by Australia that the Security Council reached its first resolution on the Indonesian Question – calling on both the Indonesian and Dutch governments to call a ceasefire.

Via a second resolution the Security Council established a Consular Commission at Batavia (Jakarta) to report on the situation throughout the Indonesian archipelago and a

Committee of Good Offices of the Security Council to try and find a resolution to the conflict.

The Committee of Good Offices, which came to be known as the UNGOC, consisted of three august persons, one from a country chosen by Indonesia, one from a country chosen by the Netherlands and a third from a country chosen by agreement between Indonesia and the Netherlands. Indonesia chose Australia, the Netherlands chose Belgium and collectively they chose the USA as the third country.

To the Indonesian population the committee became known as Komisi Tiga Negara – KTN – the commission of three nations. The UN would later change the title of the UNGOC to the UN Commission for Indonesia (UNCI) with additional authority.

Each country represented on the UNGOC chose its own representative. Australia's representative was Justice Richard Kirby, a member of the NSW Supreme Court. After having served in the 2nd AIF during the war, Justice Kirby had been appointed to the staff of Lord Mountbatten, Supreme Allied Commander SW Pacific and then to the Australian War Crimes Commission. In 1947 Prime Minister Chifley nominated him to UNGOC.

The UNGOC initially met in the US and Australia, and it wasn't until 27th October 1947 that it arrived in Indonesia to begin dialogue with the two countries at war with each other.

Meanwhile, the Consular Commission had held its initial meeting on 01 September 1947 in Jakarta during which it was decided that its function would be best served with the help of military officers supplied by each country represented on the commission – Australia, the US, UK, France, Belgium and China (the Republic of China – which at the time was embroiled in a civil war with communist forces).

Australia's party of four officers (two army and one each from RAAF and RAN) arrived in country late on 12th September, met with the members of the Consular Commission and Dutch authorities on 13th and on the 14th met with President Sukarno before deploying into the field.

They became the UN's and Australia's first peacekeepers in the modern era and while Australians recognise them as the

first peacekeepers, the UN does not. For reasons which are unclear, the UN regards its first peacekeepers as those who were appointed to serve on the UN's Truce Supervision Organisation in Palestine (Israel) from May 1948, ignoring those who served in Indonesia from September 1947 or those who served in Greece from January 1948 (UNSCOB – UN Special Committee on the Balkans).

This situation affected the campaign in recent years to have the UN recognise the ADF who served in Indonesia through the award of the UN Medal. This is discussed later in this article.

The role of military officers

The officers from the six countries initially worked to support the Consular Commission in preparing its report to the Security Council on the military situation in Indonesia. The officers did not work as a cohesive body but were loosely grouped to gather sufficient intelligence for the Commission. The American officers arrived later than the others and conducted their own assessment, delaying the final report to the Security Council.

As a result of the Consular Commission's report, the Security Council made its first reference to military assistants/observers/peacekeepers in its history and in that of the General Assembly, when on 1st November 1947 it requested that "the Consular Commission, together with its military assistants, make its services available to the Committee of Good Offices." (Resolution 36)

For the remainder of the UN's involvement in Indonesia the military observer group worked directly for the UNGOC (and later the UNCI) whilst being administered by the Consular Commission at Batavia.

As soon as the UNGOC arrived in Indonesia it began its negotiations between the Dutch and Indonesians to discuss the ceasefire ordered by the Security Council. The meetings were conducted onboard the USS Renville in

Jakarta harbour after neither side could agree on a venue until the US offered the use of the Renville as neutral territory.

The meetings resulted in a formal Truce Agreement, colloquially termed the Renville Agreement, signed on 17th January 1948. The UNGOC offered the services of its group of international 'military assistants' to help with the implementation of the agreement and to watch that the terms of the agreement were being applied by both sides.

The negotiations or ceasefire did not stop the violence. On 9 December 1947, the day after negotiations began onboard the Renville, Dutch troops committed an atrocity in the village of Rawagede, 70km east of Jakarta, rounding up and shooting all the men of the village except young boys and old men. The villagers were unarmed.

The Dutch admitted to killing 150, the Indonesians claimed 300-400 were murdered. There were no Dutch casualties. The Dutch claimed that their action was in response to a series of murders by Indonesian nationalist gangs who beheaded locals who would not support their cause.

Six members of the military observer group investigated the incident, including Australians Commander Chesterman and Brigadier Neylan. Their report condemned both sides but more so the Dutch. When the Rawagede Incident later became public it turned international opinion against the Dutch.

In December 2011 the Dutch government formally issued an apology having been ordered to do so by a Dutch court the year



MAJ Sands (Britain) examines a roadblock on the ceasefire line near Gombong in central Java. September 1947

before, and on 10 March 2020 during a visit to Indonesia the King of the Netherlands offered an apology for all the deaths and injuries resulting from the war of independence.

Monitoring the Status Quo Line

In essence, the Truce Agreement established a dividing line which separated the armed forces of both belligerents, with a demilitarized zone either side. This line delineated essentially where forces had been before the UN ordered the ceasefire and was initially drawn by the Dutch governor Dr Hubertus van Mook and became known as the Van Mook Line.

Officially it was called the Status Quo Line. Forces would hold their positions until a long-term settlement of the conflict could be reached.



SQNLDR Hackshall (Aust) on Status Quo Line / Photo: AWM



Meeting on a country road between Dutch and Indonesian forces watched on by military observers – Belgian officer centre facing camera and another in UN jeep No 4 in 1949

The UN's military observer group's task was to monitor the line and resolve any local issues. The group was divided into small 2 or 3 man teams spread across Java and Sumatra where most of the fighting had been and continued.

The teams helped local commanders from both sides interpret the Truce Agreement, brokering sub-agreements when considered necessary, and helping them

understand where the Status Quo Line extended. Indeed, in some cases they helped 'peg out' the line. Not an easy task across densely vegetated mountainous terrain.



MAJ Andrew Smith MC, Australia, and LEUT R.G. Pierre, USA, of UNGOC meet with Indonesian officers CAPT Soewito Harjoko (left) and LEUT Aboekasan at Mandiradja. August 1948

Peacemaking and/or peacekeeping?

Madura Island near Surabaya at the eastern end of Java is an unusual example of their work. The Status Quo Line had split the island in two but the Dutch had moved to assume full control of the island while the discussions on the Renville were underway.

A group of military observers with a few civilians from the UN's office in Jakarta visited the island but were divided in their opinions. Their report was not conclusive. One section was written by the Belgians who were sympathetic to the Dutch, while another section was written by the Australian and Americans who were critical of the Dutch.

An appendix written by the Australians was severely critical of the Dutch. The report also contained a critique by each 'half' of the other's opinions. The UN had only been in country for a few months and was still finding a cooperative stance.

In March 1948 the military observer group held a conference in Jakarta to compare their experiences and thoughts on how they should operate together as an international team representing the UN. The outcome was MilEx Directive 4. Signed on 25 March 1948 it is the first documented description of the role of military observers (peacekeepers) working for the UN. All observers newly arrived in Indonesia were required to read and understand MilEx 4.

The members of the observer group changed over time, and

each country's officer's deployment time varied. China's initial team was augmented in early 1948 to seven officers but unfortunately the situation in their homeland (civil war) severely affected their ability to remain in Indonesia and they returned to China in April 1949 having received no funding from either their own government, the UN or others.

Belgium's contingent remained small at less than 20 officers, most of whom remained in Indonesia for over a year, MAJ T.J. Deckers serving the UN the longest for over two and a half years. French officer deployments usually lasted for a year although COMDT J. Rousset, who arrived in September 1947, served for over two years.

American and British deployment periods are difficult to identify through lack of detailed information, but of those able to be identified, the average deployment was 12 months.

Australia nearly didn't continue with its involvement after the first four officers deployed in September 1947. The Australian military forces were undergoing major change at the time, following the end of the Second World War.

The army and air force were experienced massive 'downsizing' with both the demobilisation of wartime personnel and the resignation of personnel who might otherwise have been retained, particularly so for the air force. Even the names were changed to "Interim Army" and "Interim Air Force" until the restructuring for peace had been completed.

The Royal Australian Navy had been affected by the demobilisation as well, with its personnel numbers and skills having to be revised to reflect the smaller fleet now considered necessary to retain. Authorities in defence headquarters did not accord much priority to Australia's involvement in Indonesia.

Four weeks after it had arrived, the initial team of four officers from Australia was reduced to just CMDR Chesterman. WGCMDR Spence returned home after just three weeks through illness and BRIG Dyke and MAJ Campbell returned after a further week.

Chesterman was on his own for a month before Campbell was sent back after a plea to Canberra

from Australia's Consul-General to Indonesia, but only for another month. In early December 1947 Campbell returned home again, but Chesterman was joined a few days later by BRIG Neylan and SQNLDR Kroll.

Dialogue between Brigadiers Dyke and Neylan with authorities in the Departments of Defence and External Affairs resulted in Australia committing to maintaining a team of 14 observers, each on a nominal six-month deployment.

Thus, Australia's second deployment began in February 1948, the third in July 1948, fourth in March 1949, and the fifth in October 1949. In February 1950 after a review of requirements conducted by the UN headquarters in Jakarta, Australia's commitment was reduced to 9 officers.

By October 1950 Australia had reduced its commitment to just two. After SQNLDR Crowther returned home in December, only LTCOL Edward Aitken remained until the UN's involvement in Indonesia ended in April 1951. Aitken had served for 14 months.

The Hague conference

While the military observer group was monitoring the Status Quo Line and stepping in to investigate breaches of the terms of the Truce Agreement, UNGOC was negotiating with the Dutch and Indonesian authorities to try to find a long-term settlement of the conflict.

As time passed, world opinion swung towards Indonesia's right to self-government and ultimate sovereignty over the archipelago, but it was not an easy path. Anger, resentment and bloodshed on both sides continued to hamper negotiations and the risk to the military observers was ever present.



Transferring control of the city of Surakarta (Solo) central Java 12 Nov 1949. From left COL Ohl and MAJGEN Mollinger of the Dutch army & Indonesian LTCOL Ignatius Slamet Riyadi. Watching on are members of UNCI (UNGOC) believed to be CAPT Giacomaggi (France), SQNLDR Ker (Aust) and an unidentified British or Aust major.

Although no observer was killed during the 40 months of UN presence in Indonesia, two were severely wounded in an incident in Sumatra. At ten o'clock on the morning of 18th March 1949 a white painted jeep clearly marked with "United Nations" and "KTN" was deliberately ambushed by Indonesians in the hills near Medan.

Both observers (unarmed), British LTCOL Howard Chaplin and American USAF MAJ John Simmons Jr, received gunshot wounds and would have been killed had it not been for their armed Dutch escort officer, who was also wounded in the ambush.

The Dutch officer fought off the attackers and all three were eventually rescued and evacuated to hospital. The Dutch officer, 2nd LT Baron van Voorst tot Voorst, was later awarded the Netherlands' second highest award for gallantry – the Bronze Lion.

An Australian officer, CAPT George Dellow had an interesting experience in Surakarta in central Java. He had been in Solo (the local name for Surakarta) for a few months when he needed new shoes. With no ready-made shoes available, a Dutch officer took him to a local Indonesian cobbler to have a pair made.

When Dellow went back, alone, to collect the shoes the cobbler revealed that he was also an 'underground' officer – ie a nationalist guerilla. The cobbler introduced Dellow to other members of the underground and Dellow learned of an attack they were planning on the Dutch in town.

Dellow reported his intelligence, both to UNHQ and the Dutch but it was not taken seriously by the Dutch. A month later, more than 2,000 guerillas attacked the town while the Dutch were playing football. The attack began with grenades being thrown into the crowd at the football match, many of them Dutch troops, and it took 12 hours for the Dutch to overcome the attack. The number of casualties is unknown.

Dellow was later invited by the 'underground' to visit their hideouts, schools and amenities in the jungle. Although Dellow was keen to go, the leadership of the military observer group in Jakarta ordered him not to as it was considered too dangerous.

Meanwhile, UNGOC was having some success. An agreement was reached to attend a round table conference in The Hague to finalise the results of negotiations so far and this proceeded, brokered by



Bullet ridden windscreen of UN jeep in March 1949

the UN. By this agreement: on 27 December 1949 sovereignty was passed from the Netherlands to the Republic of Indonesia (except for the area known today as West Irian); the Dutch East Indies army was disbanded; and all Dutch troops were repatriated.

The UN's military observer group remained in country to monitor the implementation of the Hague Agreement and steadily reduced its numbers until the UN's involvement came to an end in April 1951.

At the conclusion of the UN's involvement in Indonesia, the Office of the Secretary-General, Trygve Lie, wrote to Australia's Permanent Representative to the UN: The Secretary-General wishes to take this opportunity to express...his deep appreciation of the assistance of the Government of Australia in providing military observers to enable the United Nations Commission for Indonesia to carry out its duties.

No record has been found to indicate whether these sentiments were passed on to the 65 Australian military observers. Indeed, in the service records of the ADF observers available to the public, there is only the briefest, indirect, reference of their service to the UN, usually in the form of 'secondment to External Affairs' and mention of their transport to and from Indonesia.

A campaign for recognition

In 2022 I sought the federal government's support for a campaign to encourage the UN to formally recognise the service of the ADF military observers and the award of the UN Medal.

I was advised that the matter would be pursued by the military adviser to Australia's Permanent Representative to the UN with my assistance. This the MA did and most of his interlocutors in UN HQ were in support of the campaign.

In mid 2024 however, I was formally advised by the government that it would no longer support the campaign as it was, and remains, government policy not to seek "medallic" recognition from foreign governments or agencies such as the UN.

Not to lose the momentum generated by the MA over the previous 18 months I immediately made a private submission to the Under Secretary General for

Peacekeeping Operations (USGPKO), supported by both the Australian Peacekeeping and Peacemaking Veterans' Association and the United Nations Association of Australia.

I made the submission on behalf of all the military observers who served in Indonesia, from all six countries. I sent a copy of the submission to the permanent representatives of each of the countries involved seeking their support.

I sought the award of the UN Medal which is awarded for any service to the UN in operations or missions specified by the Secretary General (USGPKO has the delegated authority). The UN's mission in Indonesia has never been specified as one that would attract the UN Medal and so my submission sought the USG's recognition and approval for the UN Medal.

The ribbon of a UN Medal is designed to reflect the circumstances or countries involved, and hence I included a proposed design reflecting the national colours of Indonesia and the Netherlands as well as the UN blue.

An alternative medal, the UN Special Service Medal is awarded to personnel who serve the UN in ways "other than peacekeeping" (UN description). Its ribbon is of fixed design and is issued with a clasp to indicate either the name of the particular UN organ concerned (eg UNGOC) or the country in which the organ operated (eg Indonesia).

As the role of the military observers in Indonesia was peacekeeping, in that they helped the belligerents find a peaceful solution to their conflict and monitored the truce and settlement agreements, the UN Medal is more appropriate. However, the UN's decision to regard its role in Palestine from 1948 as its first peacekeeping operation is now firmly entrenched and it was unlikely to support the award of the UN Medal as it would suggest that the Indonesian mission was its first peacekeeping operation - which could cause some difficulties.

In March 2025 the UN Secretariat wrote to the Permanent Representative of Australia to the UN to indicate its willingness to award the UN Special Service Medal, seeking the Australian government's help and cooperation by verifying the eligibility of any applications for the medal. Such applications would

be made to the UN via the office of the Permanent Representative.

Furthermore, the UN Secretariat expressed its appreciation that my submission highlighted "the significant contributions made by these military observers during a critical period in Indonesia's peace process".

After protracted attempts to discuss the UN's letter with the Department of Defence and to define the process that would need to be put in place for applicants to claim the UNSSM, I contacted the Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel. The response was disappointing.

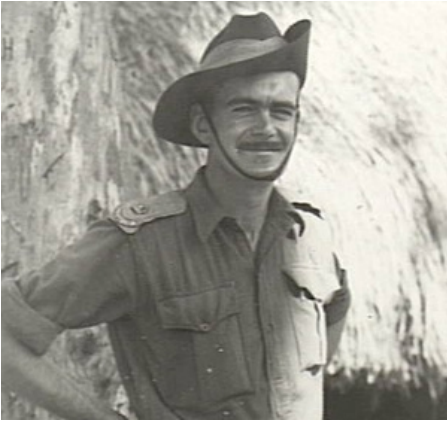
In essence, the Minister advised that the government did not regard the UN Secretariat's letter of March 2025 as constituting an offer of the medal and furthermore, it did not come through "normal diplomatic channels". The Minister indicated that, from the government's perspective, the campaign was at an end.

I then wrote to the UN's Under Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations thanking him for the sentiments expressed in the UN's March letter and for the indication of willingness to award the UNSSM. I also requested that in view of the advice given to me by the Australian government that he might review the UN Secretariat's letter and restructure it such that it meets both the UN's and the Australian government's formal expectations. That was in early October 2025.

At the time of writing this article (March 2026), there has been no indication of any further activity either in Canberra or New York, and I can only assume that the campaign is indeed at an end. I have yet to discover whether the UN sent a letter similar to that sent to the Permanent Representative of Australia in March 2025 to the Permanent Representatives of the other five countries involved, and if so whether those countries have adopted a similar position as that of Australia.

Australia played a significant role in establishing the United Nations and participating in many of its early peacekeeping endeavours, especially in Indonesia where they helped lay the foundations of how modern peacekeeping should work. All Australians should know about and be proud of their service.

Australian peacekeepers in Indonesia



Lieutenant Colonel Edward Fawcett Aitken OBE ED

LTCOL Aitken was Australia's longest serving military observer in Indonesia and was the last Australian to leave, together with all remaining observers from other countries.

He arrived in Indonesia on 29 November 1949 and departed on 20 March 1951.

Edward Aitken was born in 1913 in Kensington, Victoria and in 1929 began his military career by joining the Cadet Corps whilst he was still at school. On leaving school he became a printer but continued his involvement in the military by joining the Militia (today's CMF) where at the age of 22 he was commissioned as an officer in the 58th Battalion (Essendon Rifles).

He was promoted to captain and transferred to the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion when it was formed in May 1940 and sent to the Middle East. In June 1941 during the battle of Merdjayoun in Syria, he was captured by the Vichy French and held as a prisoner of war for two months, including time in a castle in Italy before being repatriated to the Allies under a prisoner exchange agreement.

Aitken continued to serve with battalion throughout the war in the Middle East, New Guinea and Borneo, ending up as its last commanding officer in 1945 with the rank of lieutenant colonel. The battalion was disbanded in early 1946 and Aitken then sat on war crimes trials at Morotai, Indonesia.



Commander Henry Swinfield Chesterman OBE

CMDR Chesterman was Australia's and the United Nations' first naval peacekeeper. A founding member of Australia's Fleet Air Arm, Chesterman was the first Australian to be qualified as an Observer (aircrew).

He arrived in Indonesia on 12 September 1947 and departed on 19 January 1948

Born in 1901, Henry Chesterman entered the Royal Australian Navy as a cadet midshipman as a member of the third intake of the RAN College. After graduation he served in the Royal Navy, witnessing the scuttling of the German High Seas Fleet at Scapa Flow and participating in the British involvement in the Russian civil war and the Greco-Turkish war.

In 1922 Chesterman became involved in naval aviation and later became the first naval officer to be qualified as an observer. His aviation service culminated as the senior observer on Australia's new seaplane carrier HMAS Albatross.

During WWII Chesterman served initially in Sydney, then Darwin (experiencing all the Japanese bombing raids) before being posted to General Douglas MacArthur's headquarters in Brisbane as naval liaison officer helping to coordinate naval and merchant marine assets in support of the allied campaign in the south west Pacific.

He remained in this post for the duration of the war and in September 1947 he was seconded to the Department of External Affairs to work directly for the UN in Indonesia before returning to duty in Brisbane in February 1948.



Squadron Leader Christopher Sugden DFC & bar

Christopher Sugden (left) arrived in Indonesia on 29 October 1949 and departed on 12 March 1950. He was born in 1922 in York, Western Australia and joined the cadets whilst still at school. When the Second World War broke out he immediately enlisted in the army (CMF), increasing his age to do so, and was assigned to the 10th Light Horse Regiment. In mid-1940 he enlisted in the RAAF.

He gained his 'wings' and was sent to New Guinea where he joined No 22 Squadron flying Douglas Boston bombers, remaining with the squadron throughout the war. Demobilised after the war, Sugden enlisted in the new post-war RAAF in time to be sent to Indonesia for six months as a military observer for the UN.

Back in Australia, he was singled out for praise for his flying and organisational abilities during rescue efforts associated with the 1952 flooding around Parkes, NSW. Later in the year he was posted for a tour of duty in the Korean War. Flying Gloster Meteor fighter/ground attack aircraft with No 77 Squadron he flew over 100 sorties against the enemy "displaying outstanding leadership, determination and courage" for which he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

In early 1964 Sugden led a group of three RAAF Caribou transport aircraft on their delivery flight from Canada to Australia and a few months later was appointed as the first commanding officer of the RAAF Transport Flight Vietnam (with Caribou aircraft). He had therefore flown in combat in three wars, flying different roles in each – bomber, fighter and transport.

Vale, Nicholas William Hobson DFC AFC



Pilot Officer
Nick Hobson

Nicholas Hobson was born in Devonport, Tasmania, in June 1944, just days before the Allies launched Operation Overlord, the invasion of France, half a world away.

After his education at Devonport Highschool, Hobson went to work for the Bank of New South Wales. Seeking greater opportunities, he joined the Royal Australian Air Force in October 1966 as an officer cadet and trainee pilot.

Graduating as a pilot officer in February 1968, he was posted to No. 5 Squadron, RAAF, for conversion training to fly the UH-1 Iroquois helicopter until April 1969 when he transferred to No. 9 Squadron, RAAF, then on active service in South Vietnam.

Over the next year he flew a variety of operations, including support for the Special Air Service. He was promoted to flying officer in February

1970, and after returning to Australia, was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his consistent professionalism and bravery while in Vietnam.

He was sent to England to attend a helicopter pilot instructors' course, after which he returned to 5 Squadron.

When unseasonal floods devastated Canberra and New South Wales in early 1971, Hobson and his crew were sent to Bourke in northern New South Wales, where they flew flood relief operations. In March he and his crew rescued a family of five from the roof of their farmhouse as flood waters threatened to overwhelm them. For his selfless actions he was awarded the Air Force Cross.

Hobson was next sent on exchange to the United States Air Force and upon his return, he became aide de camp to the Governor of Victoria, the Honourable Sir Henry Winneke AC KCMG KCVO OBE.

He went on to serve on United Nations operations and had two tours in command of the Australian-led Rotary Wing Aviation Unit to the

Multi-National Force and Observers' (MFO) in the Sinai.

He retired from the RAAF with the rank of wing commander in 1986, having served for 20 years, rising from trainee pilot to an experienced and decorated captain of aircraft. He amassed thousands of helicopter flying hours, having served in war zones, on peacekeeping and domestic assistance operations.

Returning to the civilian world, Hobson took up a position with the New South Wales Directorate of Bicentennial events. He went on to serve as general manager of the Westpac Surf Life Saving Australia Helicopter Rescue Service.

With the rise of the Australian republican movement in 1991, Hobson, a staunch supporter of a constitutional monarchy, became involved in the debate. In 1992 he helped set up Australians for a Constitutional Monarchy and would spend over 30 years lending his expertise to this organisation.

After a life lived with integrity and honour, he passed away, aged 81, in December 2025.

Numerous Hobson Choices



Heston Russell & Nick Hobson

Executor Heston Russell organised a Celebration of the Life of Nicholas William Hobson in January when he declared Nick was one of the most unique individuals he had ever met. The eulogy went on to praise a long-time friend and decorated veteran...

Nick won his Distinguished Flying Cross as a Huey pilot in the Vietnam War, flying missions primarily in support of our Australian SAS.

Upon returned to Australia – still in his 20s – Nick won his Air Force Cross piloting his Huey to hover and rescue every day Australians trapped on their roofs during floods in New South Wales.

There is so much more to his military career, including multiple deployment to the Sinai – of which he has incredible pictures flying Huey's past the pyramids. Through to postings and positions on exchange as an instructor with the US and UK military, flying all sorts of rotary and fixing wing aircraft.

Nick served within Government House, Melbourne. Supported a Royal Visit and proudly met the Queen. Before living out the last two decades of his life tucked away in Sydney's Kings Cross – enjoying a much more quiet and private life. Sticking to his routine and enjoying the

occasional train ride to the Blue Mountains.

I first connected with Nick at the start of last year. He reached out via email – quite persistently – and even when as far as to send me a set of his medal miniatures in the mail to confirm that he wasn't 'some random quack'.

Nick had followed my story in the public, particularly that in holding the ABC accountable, and simply wanted to share with me how proud he was to see someone like him doing what I was doing.

An Australian, a veteran, and a gay man. Nick wasn't looking for recognition of any of these – simply to share in this vulnerability, particularly given his generation and path in life to that point.

We shared in the values of being judged on our actions and character. But we were able to appreciate the unique circumstances each of us had lived, and enjoy the camaraderie this brought. Along with the sometimes difficult circumstances this created in trying to piece together the different parts of our identity.

Weve lost a highly decorated Veteran, a proud Australian and a very unique character that brought such a real and aspirational energy to life, all the way to the end.



Volunteer For ACM

Nick Hobson worked for years as a volunteer for the Australians for Constitutional Monarchy (ACM) and, at the request of the Foundation Convenor the Hon. Lloyd Waddy QC, he set up the ACM office, the systems, and everything necessary to get this organisation going.

A highly decorated officer in the RAAF. he saw service in Vietnam and in Egypt and was a man of quite extraordinary ability.

Nick, as a great ACM volunteer, soon mastered the intricacies of constitutional law, developing the case for the incorporation of the Statute of Westminster and the Australia Act into our Constitution as schedules, so that they could be amended only when approved by the people nationally and in a majority of states..

This is explained by Nick in an interview on our YouTube channel:

Australian+
Constitutional+Monarchy

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Australian+Constitutional+Monarchy

May he rest in peace.



HOW SPORT HELPS VETERANS

By Dr Miranda Van Hooff

Associate Professor Miranda Van Hooff is a dynamic and values-driven research and evaluation expert, passionately committed to enhancing the mental health and wellbeing of veterans, emergency service personnel and their families.

She has over 25 years of research experience in trauma and mental health; 15 years specifically focused on the mental health and well-being of current and transitioned ADF members and their families.

When Australians think about military service, we often think about strength, discipline, and sacrifice. What we speak about less openly is what happens after the uniform comes off.

Each year, about 6,000 Australian Defence Force members transition from military to civilian life. With them move partners, children, and families—entire households navigating identity change, disrupted routines, and the loss of a way of life that once provided structure, purpose, and belonging. For many, this transition is smooth. For others, it is marked by loneliness, declining health, and a quiet struggle to rediscover who they are and what they want to do beyond service.

Sport is not a silver bullet—but for many veterans and their families, it has become a powerful bridge between military life and civilian belonging.

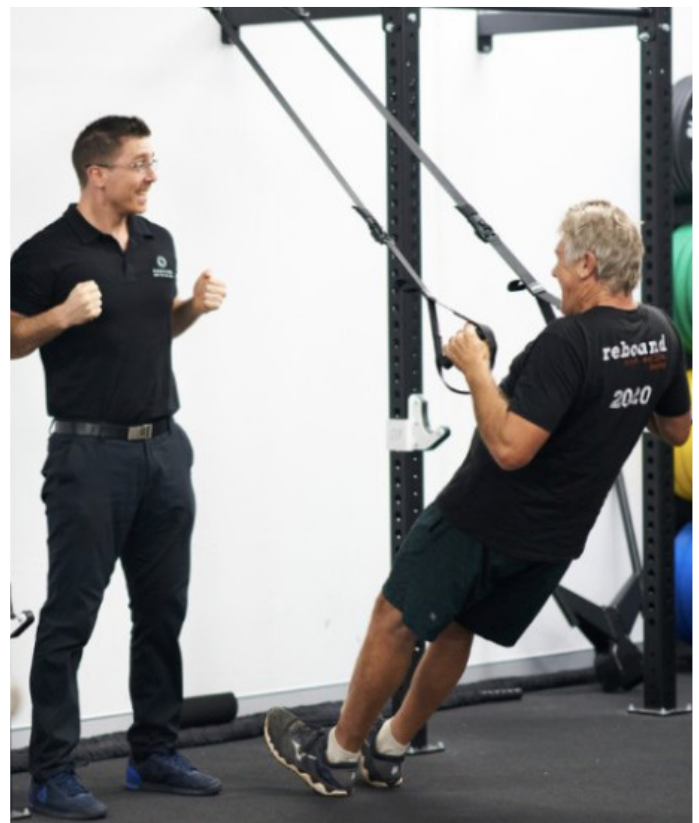
Military service shapes people profoundly. It builds teamwork, resilience, and an unshakeable sense of mission. It also creates deep social bonds—camaraderie forged under pressure. When service ends, those bonds can fall away overnight. Veterans commonly describe the loss of routine, physical conditioning, and shared purpose and mission as more confronting than the loss of rank or role.

This is where sport steps in—not as therapy in disguise, but as something familiar, practical, and human.

Physically, sport helps veterans rebuild strength, fitness, and confidence in their bodies and their abilities—especially important given the high rates of musculoskeletal injuries, chronic pain, hearing loss, and cardiovascular risk during and following service.

Training for a game, a race, or an adaptive sporting event gives structure to the week and a reason to get moving again, something to focus on. For veterans with mental or physical injuries, adaptive sport offers something even more powerful: the chance to focus on what their bodies can do, not what they have lost, fostering personal growth and self-efficacy.

Mentally, sport creates space to breathe. Exercise reduces anxiety and depression, improves sleep, and



offers a natural outlet for stress and anger—emotions many veterans struggle to manage once they leave the tightly regulated military environment.

Veterans often describe sport as the one place where their minds quiet down, where intrusive thoughts ease, and where effort and concentration replace rumination.

But perhaps sport's greatest contribution is social.

A sporting team mirrors much of what veterans miss most about military life: shared goals; mutual reliance; dark humour; and the unspoken understanding that comes from doing hard things together. In a club, on a field, or in the surf, veterans don't need to explain

At its best, sport does not replace clinical care; it complements it

INVICTUS
AUSTRALIA



themselves. They belong. New identities form—not as ex-soldiers or patients, but as teammates, competitors, coaches, and mentors.

That sense of belonging extends beyond the individual.

Families often carry the unseen weight of transition. Partners take on caregiving roles. Children adapt to changed routines and emotional volatility. When veterans reconnect with purpose and confidence through sport, those benefits ripple outward. Families report improved communication, calmer home environments, and renewed connection.

When families participate together—watching events, travelling to competitions, or joining community programs—sport becomes shared ground where pride replaces worry and hope returns.

For children in particular, seeing a parent train, compete, or simply enjoy movement again can be transformative. It offers reassurance, stability, and a positive story about life after service.

Sport also opens doors. Informal conversations on the sidelines lead to job prospects, volunteering opportunities, and new social networks. Veterans rediscover transferable skills—leadership, planning, teamwork—in environments where those qualities are valued rather than misunderstood.

Importantly, sport lowers barriers to help-seeking. It is non-clinical, strength-based, and stigma-free. For veterans reluctant to engage with traditional mental health services, sport often becomes the first step back into community

life—and sometimes the gateway to further support.

At its best, sport does not replace clinical care; it complements it. It restores routine, identity, and agency while reinforcing the truth that recovery is not just about reducing symptoms, but about rebuilding a meaningful life.

For veterans and their families, sport is more than a game. It is a place to belong, a reason to keep moving forward, and a powerful reminder that service does not end when the uniform comes off—it simply takes a different form.

The Veteran Sport Research Report, which explores how sport supports identity, connection, and wellbeing during the transition from service to civilian life, was written by Associate Professor Miranda Van Hooff and commissioned by Invictus Australia.



SPONSORSHIP PROPOSAL

**THE AUSTRALIAN PEACEKEEPERS AND
PEACEMAKERS VETERANS' ASSOCIATION
FUNDRAISING DINNER**

DATE: 12 SEPTEMBER 2026

VENUE: THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL CANBERRA



INTRODUCTION

The Australian Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Veterans' Association Ltd (APPVA) is an all-volunteer, non-remunerated veteran support charity that assists Australians who are serving, or have served, in peacekeeping, peacemaking, and humanitarian operations within Australia and overseas.

INVITATION TO PARTNER IN DELIVERING OUR INAUGURAL FUNDRAISING DINNER

This dinner honours the service and sacrifice of Australian peacekeepers through the celebration of the opening of the new Peacekeeper Galleries at the Australian War Memorial. It will be a prestigious event hosted by APPVA, offering sponsors national visibility, premium hospitality, and alignment with a historic commemorative milestone.

Guests will enjoy a three-course meal, complemented by a full range of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages. The evening will also feature a selection of auction items, offering additional opportunities to contribute to fundraising efforts supporting the APPVA's ongoing initiatives.





ABOUT THE EVENT

A PLATFORM FOR ENGAGEMENT AND INFLUENCE

The evening will feature a keynote address by **General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK AC (Mil) CVO MC (Retd)**, as well as an address by Mr Matt Anderson PSM, Director of the Australian War Memorial.

The program will also include speeches and attendance by senior government representatives, Defence leadership, and members of the diplomatic corps.

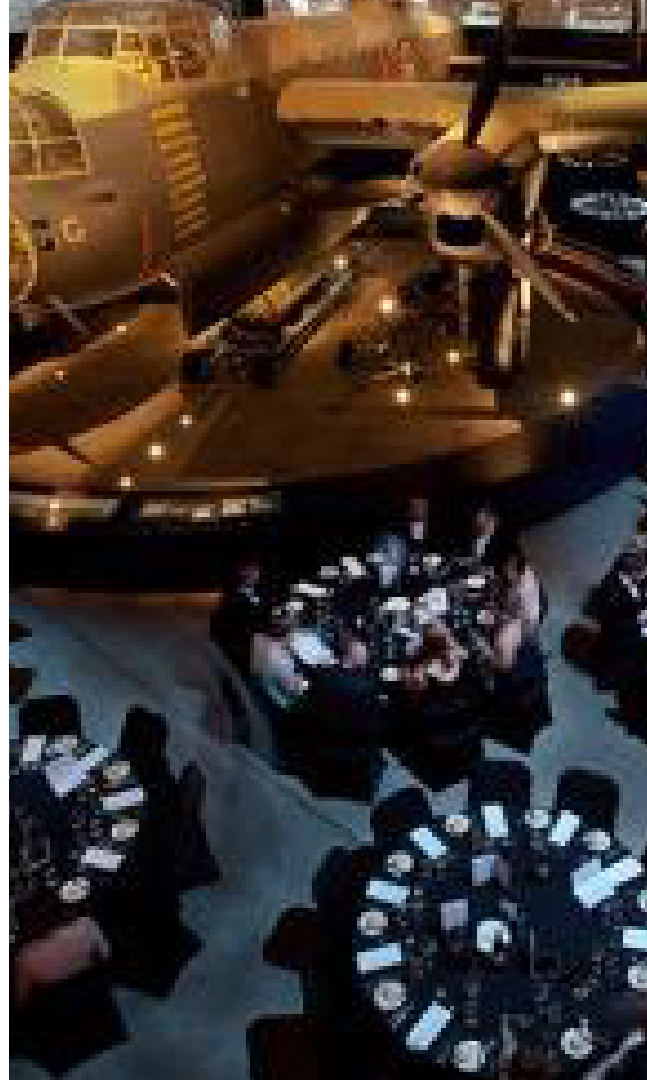
The program will be expertly hosted by **Mr Mark Beretta OAM as Master of Ceremonies**. A curated auction will be conducted throughout the evening, providing additional opportunities to support APPVA's ongoing initiatives.

Please note that guest confirmations can only be finalised within three months of the event. Guest lists are subject to change and may be amended at any time, including on the evening of the event.

EVENT OBJECTIVES

The outcomes of this event will also assist with our programs and nationally significant commemorative activities including:

- **MONUMENT TO ADF PERSONNEL WHO DIED IN TRAINING**
- **PEACEKEEPER RETURN TO COUNTRY PROJECT AND DOCUMENTARY**
- **CARE PACKAGES FOR PEACEKEEPERS**
- **RED EARTH RECOVERY**





SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

TAILORED PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

This event provides an exclusive environment in which to build relationships with senior defence stakeholders and engage alongside eminent national and international leaders, while demonstrating visible support for initiatives of national significance. Our sponsorship tiers have been structured to deliver clear value through strategic brand exposure, curated engagement opportunities, and association with respected programs and commemorative activities.

BRONZE SPONSOR

Table of 10

Quarter-page advertisement in Peacekeeper magazine (electronically cross-published to 85,000 readers of The Last Post)

Announcement across social media of over 20,000 followers

SILVER SPONSOR

The benefits of Bronze plus:

A premium Table of 10.

Program logo inclusion.

Invitation to the APPVA Red Earth Recovery Simpson Desert Crossing Event for one passenger.

Contribution of an article in 2026/27 and a half-page advertisement in Peacekeeper magazine (electronically cross-published to 85,000 readers of The Last Post).

Verbal recognition during the event.

GOLD SPONSOR

The benefits of Silver plus:

Opportunity for a member of your organisation to accompany veterans and the film crew for the Return to Country program.

Contribution of **two** articles in 2026/27 and a full-page advertisement in Peacekeeper magazine.

Free membership for the veterans within your organisation for one year.

Announcement across social media of over 20,000 followers.

PLATINUM SPONSOR

The benefits of Gold plus:

Acknowledgement as the platinum sponsor of the dinner.

Speech opportunity.

Acknowledgement as being the major seed funding contributor for the Monument to ADF Members Killed in Training.

Private guided tour of the Peacekeeper Galleries.

An article per edition in 2026/27 and a full-page advertisement in Peacekeeper magazine.

Logo prominence Banner displayed at event.

Announcement across social media of over 20,000 followers.

5 AVAILABLE
\$5,000 (GST INC)

3 AVAILABLE
\$15,000 (GST INC)

2 AVAILABLE
\$25,000 (GST INC)

1 AVAILABLE
\$50,000 (GST INC)

All donations are tax deductible



WHY SPONSOR US?

THE VALUE OF YOUR SPONSORSHIP

Partnering with the Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans' Association (APPVA) enables organisations to directly support nationally significant commemorative projects and veteran wellbeing initiatives that deliver lasting impact across Australia's defence and peacekeeping community.

● TARGETED EXPOSURE

Sponsorship of the Inaugural Fundraising Dinner contributes to initiatives that honour sacrifice, strengthen connection, and support the wellbeing of serving and former personnel, while providing partners with the opportunity to engage alongside senior defence leaders, government, diplomatic representatives, and corporate stakeholders in a highly curated setting.

● OUR PROJECTS IN MORE DETAIL

Monument to ADF Personnel Who Died in Training

APPVA is delivering a nationally significant memorial to honour Australian Defence Force personnel who have lost their lives while training for operational service. Approved for a prominent position on Anzac Parade in Canberra by the National Capital Authority, this monument will address a longstanding gap in Australia's commemorative landscape.

Peacekeeper Return to Country Program and Documentary

APPVA is developing a Return to Country Program designed to support selected peacekeeping veterans in revisiting the nations where they once served. These journeys are intended to honour service, support personal healing, strengthen understanding of Australia's peacekeeping history, and preserve these experiences through a professionally produced documentary.

Care Packages for Peacekeepers and Family Support

This project is aimed at delivering care packages to currently deployed peacekeepers while also providing home-front support to their families. These packages are designed to bring a tangible sense of connection and comfort to those serving overseas, while reinforcing support for loved ones during their absence.

Red Earth Recovery – Red Centre Wellbeing Expedition

Red Earth Recovery is a structured wellbeing initiative delivered as a professionally facilitated, tagalong 4WD expedition across the Simpson Desert. The Red Centre Wellbeing Expedition brings Australian veterans together in a remote environment to foster peer connection, shared challenge, and supported reflection, strengthening mental health, resilience, and social connection.

Additional information is available on our website using the QR here:






LET'S CONNECT

JOIN US AS A SPONSOR

Your sponsorship strengthens national recognition of peacekeeping service and supports the wellbeing of veterans and families through our initiatives.

PLEASE DIRECT ALL ENQUIRIES THROUGH THE EVENT ORGANISER, NICK WILLIAMS

 0428307241

 nic.williams@peacekeepers.asn.au

 www.peacekeepers.asn.au





APPVA – JOIN NOW

Experience a new generation of veteran organisation that you can comfortably trust as your source of truth and will represent you and all veterans, veteran family members and the wider veteran support network such as the medical community.

We respect the contributions made by participants in modern operations and demonstrate this by appointing young veterans to representational positions.

By uniting like-minded individuals and organisations, including all those who support our community we are transforming the veteran and veteran family landscape for the greater good.

Our promise is to provide an unwavering commitment to all veterans and their families because no veteran or veteran family should ever feel isolated or under represented.

Register here to join Now

<https://peacekeepers.asn.au/membership-levels>



Veteran Events Hub Support from trusted organisations, all in one place

The Rehab Management hub connects veterans to local social events from dozens of trusted organisations across Australia.

Visit the Events Hub

rehabmanagement.com.au/events



Or scan the QR code

rehab
MANAGEMENT
putting people first

OUR PURPOSE

To support the transition, health, wellbeing, and integration into society of all participants in past and present operations, and their families, so that they are valued and can attain happiness after service.



The Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans' Association's purpose is to support the integration into society of all participants in past and present operations, and their families, so that they are valued and can attain happiness after service.

Our strategic focus is to:

- To establish a monument dedicated to those members of the ADF killed while in training for operational service
- To return our members to the operation areas in which they served for commemoration and healing
- To celebrate the opening of the new Peacekeeper galleries in the Australian War Memorial with a dinner, second quarter next year.

We care for all Australians who have deployed on Peacekeeping operations be they ADF veterans, DFAT personal, AFP or state police, AEC and we extend our care to first responders and anyone who has deployed in the national interest offshore on operations or onshore to support humanitarian operations. We have fun socially and support families.

Secretary@peacekeepers.asn.au
www.peacekeepers.asn.au





LEST WE FORGET

AT THE GOING DOWN OF THE SUN AND IN THE MORNING, WE WILL REMEMBER THEM



Veteran Services

Here for veterans,
and their families,
every day.



Providing free advice,
support and programs,
tailored for veterans:

- DVA claims and advocacy
- Wellbeing and financial assistance
- Employment assistance
- Homelessness and housing
- Spur Ranch Equine Program



Visit us at our
Veteran & Family Hubs
or call **02 8088 0388**

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