



## VIETNAM VETERANS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA NSW BRANCH INC

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National Patron - RADM Neil Ralph AO DSC RAN

New South Wales Patron - Gordon "Dutchy" Holland

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## NSW Presidents Report 2018 To Annual Congress

It is with regret but some pride I can report that this year will be the final year of a Vietnam Veterans Day Commemorative Ceremony being held at the Sydney Cenotaph.

Falling numbers of members wishing to travel into Sydney to attend an 11.00am ceremony and the conflicting time of the ceremony with other Vietnam Veteran Day Ceremonies held around the outer suburbs, particularly at the Macarthur Sub Branch and St Marys (who hold a sunset ceremony to coincide with the timing of the Long Tan battle)

We have also found it more and more difficult to obtain interesting and relevant key note speakers. We have been lucky enough to have had the services of the NSW Governors Professor Dame Marie Bashir AD and General David Hurley AC DSC

This year however we have the pleasure of having Ms **Patricia "Little Pattie" Thelma Thompson (née Amphlett) OAM** I had the pleasure of listening to Little Pattie give the keynote address to a packed house at the Saint John of God Hospital about 5 or 6 years back. She described in graphic detail how she and Col Joye were evacuated out of Nui Dat on the night of the Long Tan battle. She then sang A Capella Satchmo's "What a Wonderful World", I can truthfully say that there was not a dry eye in the house, and Little Pattie's voice is better than ever.

I can also report that we are not the only group struggling to get numbers. I recently received this missive from the Sydney Reserved Forces Committee

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### FINALISATION OF THE Reserve Forces Day SYDNEY PARADE AFTER ITS 20TH ANNIVERSARY PARADE

It is with regret, and for practical reasons, I wish to inform you that this will be our last RFD Sydney parade.

Proudly, over the past twenty years, these parades have raised the profile of the service of reservists past and present, however this achievement would not have been possible or the parades successful, without the participation of the associations and support given by others to make it happen, for which we are thankful.

The RFDC database statistics which recorded participation in our RFD Sydney events, now shows that of the 84 associations and associated bodies only 27 participated in the 2017 RFD National parade. Several associations decided last year to disband or not march in future parades or had difficulty in supplying marchers and a top level review of the RFD operations was undertaken late last year.

## REVIEW OF THE FUTURE OF RFD AND THE NATIONAL PARADE IN SYDNEY

After the National Launch for 2018 and conference, taking into account the other States reports of their own 2017 parades and activities, it was decided to set up and carry out a confidential review by a small committee of senior members of RFDC headed by the RFDC National Executive Officer and NSW Deputy CM to the Hon Tim Fischer AC, LTCOL John Moore OAM RFD ED Ret'd, to examine the current situation.

\* This committee identified several options concerning the future of RFDC. Of these options only the cessation of future operations for Sydney was considered viable. Some of the considerations for this were:

\* The Council's aim of raising the status of Reservists has largely been achieved.

\* Advancing age and infirmity is significantly affecting the numbers supporting RFDC activities and active Association participation

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Well NSW is in the envious position of actually increasing its overall membership with the members of the Far North Coast Branch changing their allegiance from the VVFA. So I would like to formally welcome the President and Secretary Sheldon and Cathy Maher to our National Membership. The movement of the Far North Coast Sub Branch from the Granville based Federation to the NSW VVAA was not without some dramas. The National and State Presidents of the Federation had rather angry mail floating back and forth between themselves and the Sub Branch President. In fact one of our own sub branches was trying to say that any move would be possibly illegal and/or detrimental to the VVAA. The state executive of NSW did keep a close watch on the procedural matters that Far North Coast undertook and can advise National that we are more than happy with how the move was made and that Far North Coast (even though they did not have to constitutionally supply it) provided us with a full "Independent" audit of their finances. So as close as I can gather what is being thrown up by Granville amounts to sower grape seeds being spread due to the loss of revenue that this meant to the Federation.

Last year I attended the usual amount of NSW DVA Deputy Commissioner Round Table Conferences, however I think that we can stop this personal expense and waste of time. This round table has become a meeting place for organisations representing the RSL or Young Diggers and it seems that most people at the DVA feel that Vietnam Veterans are finalised as far as claims are concerned. Nothing could be further from the truth as I am currently doing two claims for Vietnam Veterans still working full time although in their seventies. But as all of us are covered by the VEA ACT, there are not going to be any major changes to that, only changes to the SOP's and these are handled at a National level not a state.

I have continued the fight for justice for one of our brothers who has spent 18 months in Long Bay for a crime he admitted to, but the Minister for Immigration the Honourable Peter Dutton has seen fit to keep him incarcerated in the Villawood Detention Centre awaiting deportation to NZ. So far his time in Villawood has been over double of that in Long Bay. Twice the Minister has been taken to the High Court and twice the Minister has been told by the courts that his decision "HAS NO BASIS IN LAW" The Minister staunchly refuses to accept the refers decision however (are we surprised) and wants to send this KIWI (he was 5 years old when his parents migrated but forgot to take out Australian citizenship) who served Australia with distinction in Vietnam being Mentioned in Dispatches.

The implementation of the new ATDP Training system has begun. At this point only "Recognition of Prior Learning" is available however we look forward to the availability of new training in the not too distant future allowing interested practitioners to regain the levels they previously held.

In 2017 I commenced the implementation of the State Executive visiting all sub branches. I attended Bathurst Sub Branch AGM last year and I must admit was given a great reception from a good lot of blokes. I have accepted the invitation from Far North Coast to attend their AGM later this year. Pam and Andy regularly visit both Wagga Wagga and South Coast. I was asked at the last AGM why don't I just go, why wait for an invite. Well:

1. I don't consider that just because I am State President I can drop in at any time. All sub branches are independent entities.
2. Most sub branches who do issue invitation do so for me or other executive to attend some event or other. An example of this is Wagga Wagga where we are sponsors of 21 Platoon Kapooka and we go down to present the Best in Platoon Award.
3. We have now been asked to sponsor a "Rifle Platoon" at Singleton Army Base and hopefully this will be in place before National Conference



Greg Cant

NSW Sub Branch President

17/04/2018