



VETERANS' NEWSLETTER

Minister's Message



Welcome to the latest edition of our Veterans' Newsletter.

In August, we commemorated the service and sacrifice of Vietnam War veterans through national and local services on and around Vietnam Veterans' Day on 18 August. This year marked the 50th anniversary year of end of Australia's involvement in the war. I was pleased to join the Premier in hosting a special luncheon at Parliament House for Vietnam War veterans. A highlight was special guest Little Pattie who enraptured all the guests. I also attended the Vietnam Vigil to honour Tasmanian soldiers who lost their lives in the War. I travelled to Nubeena to open their refurbished War Memorial. Further details are included in this newsletter.

I was also pleased to recently attend an event at Legacy Hobart to talk about the Frank MacDonald Memorial Prize tour I participated in April, particularly its special connection this year to Legacy's Centenary celebrations while at Pozieres in France when the Centenary Torch Relay commenced. I look forward to being one of the many people privileged to participate in the Torch Relay when it comes to Tasmania in early October.

In June, the Federal Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Matt Keogh MP, announced that RSL Tasmania will receive \$5 million to develop the Tasmanian VeteranHub across the State. This represents a significant step to supporting our veterans and their families and allows services to be delivered into the communities where they are most needed.

On a sad note, Judy Travers, a dedicated educator with the Department for Education, Children and

Young People, passed away in May. I paid tribute in Parliament to Judy and her many achievements. Judy was instrumental in shaping the Frank MacDonald Memorial Prize, was recognised by RSL Tasmania with Life Membership, and was on the Board of Friends of Soldiers Memorial Avenue. In 2019, Judy was awarded an Order of Australia Medal for service to education administration and to the community, and was inducted into the Tasmanian Honour Roll of Women. Vale, Judy.

To all our veterans and their families - we thank you for your service.

Lest we forget
Hon Guy Barnett MP
Minister for Veterans' Affairs

Commemorating Vietnam War Veterans

On 18 August, we commemorated Vietnam Veterans' Day on the anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan in 1966.

Long Tan was one of the fiercest battles of the Vietnam War, fought in a torrential downpour, where just over 100 Australian and New Zealand soldiers prevailed in a pitched battle against over 2,000 North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops.

2023 also marked the 50th anniversary of the end of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War. To recognise the special significance of the 50th anniversary, a national service was held at the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial in Canberra. The service was broadcast live by the ABC and streamed online.

In addition, the Federal Department of Veterans' Affairs produced a Commemorative Medallion and Certificate of Commemoration to be made available to every living veteran, widow and other family members of veterans of the Vietnam War.

On 3 August, a Service of Remembrance, called the Vietnam Veterans Vigil, was held at each grave site across Australia and overseas for Australians who lost their lives in the Vietnam War. About 1,800 Tasmanians served in the War with 16 losing their lives. Vigils were held in Hobart, Launceston, Wynyard and Ulverstone.

Following the Vigils, the Premier and Minister for Veterans' Affairs hosted a luncheon at Parliament House for Vietnam War veterans. A special guest was 'Little Pattie', Patricia Thompson, who entertained the troops in Vietnam and was singing on stage as a 17 year-old when the Long Tan battle started and who was then evacuated.

The Tasmanian Government has provided \$1,000 to each of the five sub-branches of the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia - Tasmania to commemorate the anniversary.

Further reading:

[Battle of Long Tan](#)



[Australia's withdrawal of troops from the Vietnam War](#)

VeteranHub

On 28 June 2023, the Federal Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Hon Matt Keogh MP, announced that RSL Tasmania had been awarded \$5 million to establish a Veterans' and Families' Hub network across Tasmania.



'VeteranHub' will operate in seven locations around Tasmania. It is estimated that 90 per cent of all registered veterans live within 50km of one of these locations.

This model will allow veterans and their families to receive the right support, either remotely or in person, and complement and work with the Veterans' Hub that will be established in Burnie and the recently renovated RSL Launceston premises.

Veterans and their family members will be able to register through the dedicated website, and a VeteranHub Navigator will guide them through the process of obtaining services, treatments and supports they may need to bolster and improve their lives.

The Tasmanian Government has supported the VeteranHub through funding which I have lobbied for over four years, with the Australian Government, to enable an initial study by the University of Tasmania that identified the need for services to be available broadly across Tasmania.

[Find out more >>](#)

Veterans' Reference Group welcomes new member - Don Ryan

The Tasmanian Government's Veterans' Reference Group welcomes Don Ryan.

Don joined the Army Reserve the year after he finished Grade 12. He began with 10 Field Ambulance in Hobart then transferred to 44 Transport Squadron when he transferred to work on the North West Coast.

Don joined the Lenah Valley RSL sub-branch, including serving on the committee, to further his strong interest in supporting our veterans.

Don was involved in the promotion campaign for the Government's Veteran Wellbeing Voucher Program.

Don is particularly keen to assist in veterans reintegrating into civilian life.



Legacy Week and Centenary celebrations

Legacy Week was held from 27 August to 2 September.

The Legacy Week appeal has been running since the 1940s and is a time for all Australians to show their support for the widow(er)s and children whose loved ones have served our country.

The Legacy badge is a special emblem of support for our veterans' families, symbolising our nation's greatest values of mateship, compassion and fairness.

Legacy badges may be little but the funds they raise make a big impact in the lives of our veterans' families.

Legacy Week is a time to give back to the families of those who have given so much.



Legacy Centenary Torch Relay

The Torch Relay began in Pozieres, France on 23 April and has travelled via London to Australia, where it will visit all 44 Legacy Clubs. The Torch will be coming through Victoria in September to land in Tasmania in early October, then back to Melbourne to complete its journey at the Shrine of Remembrance on 13 October. You can follow its journey by downloading the *Legacy 100th Torch Relay* app.

[Find out more >>](#)

20th anniversary of the passing of Frank MacDonald MM

23 August marked 20 years since the passing of Frank MacDonald MM at the age of 107. Frank was Tasmania's last surviving World War 1 veteran, and the last surviving decorated Australian veteran.

Frank was born in Abbotsham near Ulverstone in 1896. In August 2003, a State Funeral was held for Frank in Ulverstone, where he returned to live in later life.

At the time, Prime Minister John Howard paid tribute to Frank: 'A courageous and remarkable man, he served in two wars, they're just an extraordinary generation to go through what he went through, the hell of Passchendaele and the Western Front'.

Tasmanian Premier Jim Bacon said: 'In mourning his death, we are really celebrating a great life and the passing of a generation of Australians who served their country when the country called.'



The inspiration for the Frank MacDonald Memorial Prize (FMMP) came from the reflections on Frank's legacy at his funeral and wake. Jim Bacon, Ian Kennett, then RSL Tasmania President, and others present spoke of the need to ensure young Tasmanians were aware of the sacrifices of previous generations.

The first FMMP competition for year 9 students was held in 2004 and embarked on the first tour in 2005. The FMMP is a prestigious award and has offered a life unique experience for over 100 students over the last 19 years, ensuring the legacy of Frank MacDonald is carried on.

Thank you to Terry Roe, Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia - Tasmania Branch

I wanted to take a moment to express my heartfelt gratitude to Mr Terry Roe – President of Vietnam Veterans Australia Association – Tasmania, who has made the difficult decision after 6 years in the role to vacate the position.

Terry's tireless commitment to not only our Vietnam veterans but all Tasmanian veterans has left an indelible mark. His innovative initiatives and steadfast guidance has ensured that members and beneficiaries receive the support they deserve.

Through challenges and triumphs, Terry's unwavering optimism reminds us of the profound impact that service and dedication can have on our community. Your legacy will continue to inspire us for generations to come.

Once again, thank you for your selfless service and exceptional leadership. You have set an exemplary standard, and we are deeply grateful for your contributions to the whole veteran community.



[Find out more >>](#)

Concessions & Discounts Tasmanian Government Guide 2023-24

In August, the Tasmanian Government released the new version of the Concessions & Discounts Guide. The Guide offers a broad range of valuable concessions and discounts for eligible Tasmanians, including veterans, and their families.

This year, we have introduced a quick reference guide to make it easier than ever to find and use the available savings.

The concessions and discounts will help ease the pressure of increasing cost-of-living expenses.

Copies of the Guide are available at Service Tasmania, libraries, Neighbourhood Houses, RSL Tasmania and many other locations around the State.

The Guide can also be accessed online at concessions.tas.gov.au.



Veteran Wellbeing Voucher Program

The Tasmanian Government is committed to supporting the health and wellbeing of Tasmanian veterans. As part of that commitment, the Veteran Wellbeing Voucher Program is now open for its second full year in 2023-24.

The free Program is open to eligible Tasmanian veterans (those who have previously served in the Australian Defence Force including Reservists) who can apply for a voucher of up to \$100 to put towards the cost of registration or membership fees at participating gyms and sporting clubs.

Gyms and sports clubs also benefit by an opportunity to grow their membership and are reimbursed for each voucher they accept. The program is open to gyms and clubs throughout Tasmania.

All Tasmanians should have the opportunity to live active, healthy lives. This targeted program helps veterans enjoy the benefits of participating in a sporting club or gym.



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Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide - submission closing date

To understand the common themes, systemic issues and risk factors that contribute to suicide and suicide behaviours of serving and former Defence members, the Commission invites people and organisations to share their stories.

The Commission wishes to hear from a range of people, including serving and former Defence members, their families, carers and advocates. Members of the public and organisations or institutions are also invited to make submissions.

Submissions close at 11.59pm on Friday 13 October 2023.

Protections and legal support are available for people who make a submission. [Defence and Veterans Legal Service](#) gives free independent legal support to share experiences with the Royal Commission.

Interim Report

On 11 August 2022, the Commission released its [Interim Report](#) which provided 13 recommendations to the Australian Government. The [Australian Government's response](#) was released in September 2022.

The Commission expects to release its final report in mid-2024.

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