



# THURUNKA

September 2008

Newsletter of the  
Royal Australian Signals Association (NSW) Inc.

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## Coming Events - 2008

Update your diary now

Committee Meeting 5	Wed	24 Sep	1800 hrs	RACA Club
** Eastern Region Corps Dinner	<del>Fri</del>	<del>17 Oct</del>	<del>1900 hrs</del>	Offrs/Sgts Mess Randwick Barracks
See below for confirmed details of ER Corps Dinner				
RA Signals Re-union SA		7-11 Nov		Adelaide, SA
Annual Memorial Service	Sun	23 Nov	1100 hrs	Signal Hill, South Head
Annual General Meeting	Sun	23 Nov	1230 hrs	Paddington RSL Club
Rhumb Corps Luncheon	Wed	3 Dec	1200 hrs	CTA Club
** Committee Luncheon	Sun	7 Dec	1200 hrs	TBA
THURUNKA December edition		Early-December		

\*\* TBC: Dates and details to be advised or confirmed

NB: Dates and details of events may change but are constantly reviewed in an attempt to advise changes to members in a timely manner.

CONFIRMED DETAILS of ER Corps Dinner

### Eastern Region Offrs/Sgts Corps Dinner

will be held at

*Randwick Barracks  
Offrs/Sgts Mess*

Friday 21<sup>st</sup> November, 2008  
1830 hrs for 1900 hrs

Contact: LT Piotr (Peter) Gajewski,  
17 Sig Regt

### Rhumb Corps Luncheon

*CTA Club, Martin  
Place, Sydney*

Noon, 3rd December  
2008

**Will We See You  
There?**

## In this issue

Coming Events

Reserve Forces Day 2008

Vale / Sick Parade

Association matters

Corps Matters

• RASigs Reunion, Vietnam

• 1 Sig Regt 50 birthday

• RA Sigs AWM  
Commemoration, Nov 08

Current Issues

Medals for Long Tan Heroes

Changes to Service Pensions

Military History

• Dedication of RASigs  
Plaque

FYI

Search & Find

Letters to the Editor

Tail-end Charlie

• Tribute to Sig Sean  
McCarthy

## Next Issue

Copy for the next issue of  
THURUNKA must be in  
the hands of the Editor,  
Ken Forway,  
28 Mendelssohn Avenue  
EMERTON 2770.

Or by e-mail:

[thurunka@optusnet.com.au](mailto:thurunka@optusnet.com.au)

NO LATER THAN  
14<sup>th</sup> November 2008.

# Recent Events

## Reserve Forces Day 2008, Sydney

**I**deal weather on Sunday 6th July 2008 resulted in larger than normal attendance of both marchers and members of the public. Association attendance was slightly better than usual with 20 members and potential members present.

Our new Association Standard was paraded for the first time. Despite an identity crisis when the Standard and bearer disappeared for rehearsals prior to the parade and a typical "great coats on - great coats off" for the order of march, the parade was impressive. An audible band may have assisted with keeping in step.

The cost of the Standard, together with those of the other NSW Associations that applied, was met by the Pratt Foundation following a request by the NSW RFD Council. The Standards are of good quality and were made in China.

The Parade was enhanced by the presence of the NSW Mounted Police detachments, including a detachment in period uniform. The



Fellow member Bruce Reeding with our Standard Bearer, Mike McEvoy, displaying our new RASigs Ass'n (NSW)'s standard.

Military Vehicles Association supported the parade with a number of operational vehicles including Bren gun carriers, Ferret scout cars, a Saracen APC, a Saladin AFV, jeeps, an Austin Champ, a WW2 Army Entertainment Unit Dodge Van and several motor cycles.

Three of our members - Tony Ballantine, Ernie Flint and Doug Robson were special guests of the Reserve Forces Day Council as original CMF enlistees (1948-1950). They joined the National RFD Chairman, the Hon Sir Laurence Street AC KCMG QC and other guests at NSW

Parliament House for lunch after the parade.

Following the Parade, Association members enjoyed lunch and a few ales at the Ship Inn, Circular Quay.

Attendees at the Parade will receive a Commemorative Certificate signed by the Governor-General, Major-General Michael Jeffery AC CVO MC.

*Chris Ballantine*

President



Vale - LTCOL PA (Allen) Tonkin (Retd)  
late of Shoal Bay, NSW  
1<sup>st</sup> May, 1917 - 21<sup>st</sup> April 21, 2008

*...a few words:*

Phillip Allen Tonkin was born in Ararat, Victoria. He attended school in Ballarat, and following school, worked with his father in the hardware business.

He joined the militia in 1938, the AIF in 1940, became part of the 7th Division, specialising in signals and served in the Middle East in Syria, Palestine and the Western Desert.

On return to Australia, Allen's group served twice in New Guinea. During the second tour he obtained the nickname, Lucky Tonkin after an incident where a bullet pierced his tin hat but somehow missed him. On December 23, 1943, he was mentioned in dispatches for distinguished services.

Allen was carried from service in New Guinea by fuzzy wuzzy angels. He spent a long time recovering and in this time he was married and a daughter, Trish, was born. He was discharged from the army in 1944 and the marriage broke up about that time.

He rejoined the army in 1946 and had risen to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel by the time he was discharged in 1966. He was later recalled to administer Adamstown Barracks for Northern Area Command until the end of the Vietnam War.

In December 1966, Allen married Gwen in Sydney and his second life started. He was married, debonair and able to live a less regimented life. The two bought a house in at Soldiers Point.

He became patron of Nelson Bay RSL but showing signs of boredom

sought and gained a position at the Fisheries Research Centre at Taylors Beach.

In 1977, Allen suffered chest pains and thus, was one of the early open heart patients in St Vincent's Hospital in Sydney.

Allen was a great giver to society. One of his passions was Legacy, as was Gwen's. He was a keen golfer and an active bowler and was always helping out on fundraising days.

Eight years ago Allen and Gwen moved to Harbourside Haven, first to a self care villa then the hostel. Allen's health deteriorated and he was admitted to John Hunter hospital a few weeks ago. His granddaughter, Jane, was there to nurse him and see that he got the best of treatment.

He will be sadly missed by his wife, Gwen and step family, Robyn and Brian Mephram, Holly, Jane and Scarlet and Paul and Jennie Gray and Phillip, Allen and Allison. His daughter, Trish, and her husband, Peter and family will also feel a great loss.

*Bob Martin*

EXAMINER

*Lindsay Allen from a newspaper clipping.*

I recall he was a regular guest at 130 Sig Sqn Fort Wallace, Stockton in the 70's. At the time he lived at Anna Bay, near Stockton and had the nickname "Mayor of Anna Bay".

*Lindsay Allen*

LTCOL PA (Allen) Tonkin (Retd)

*...a few more words.*

I knew Allen well in my days with 1 Sig Regt Ingleburn in the 1960's. He was OC of the TF Sig Sqn ARA of the times. I hesitate to suggest titled 110 TF Sig Sqn. He made a name for himself by being popular with the troops and we fellow officers and he gave time to my CMF Group attached to the Regiment. He retired to Port Stephens in the 70's to Soldiers Point. He was a prominent member of the Port Stephens RSL rising to committee. He must have lived to a fine old age. I had heard he had passed away before this.

He distinguished himself and his Squadron by joining the Regiment at its formation in, I can recall, the 1960's under LTCOL Wolf Cox. Allen helped introduce the Regiment and Signals to a new range of wireless equipment being the C42 (VHF) C11/R210 (HF) fitted in the new Land Rovers Fitted for Wireless (FFW) which were a great success of the times equipped with the new equipment and integral WS battery chargers.

The Task Force title he commanded may have been 110 Sig Sqn ARA and would have been part of 1 Division ARA HQ at MOORE PARK and to whom Tonkin's Squadron provided Comms in a number of exercises held by the Division in the PUTTY and BROKE areas in the mountains. We CMF officers visited these exercises at intervals.

LTCOL A W (Tony) Ballantine RFD ED (Retd).

**VALE - SIG Sean McCarthy  
KIA in Afghanistan, July 2008.**

A tribute to Sean is in 'Tale-end Charlie' at the end of this edition of *THURUNKA*.

**VALE - British Signaller KIA  
SIG Wayne Bland, 16 Sig Regt, RSigs, 14 Aug 08**

It is with great sadness that the Ministry of Defence must confirm the death of Signaller Wayne Bland, from 16 Signal Regiment, in Kabul, Afghanistan on Monday 11 August 2008.

At around 1600hrs local time, Signaller Bland was providing top-cover whilst travelling in a convoy of vehicles undertaking a route familiarisation patrol in Kabul, when the vehicles were attacked by a suicide bomber. The attacker rammed his vehicle into the patrol and detonated an explosive device, which wounded Signaller Bland and two further soldiers from 16 Signal Regiment. All were treated at a military hospital but sadly, Signaller Bland died as a result of his wounds.

Signaller Wayne Bland, 21, was single and had no children. His family have issued the following statement:

"Wayne was a much-loved son, grandson, brother and uncle who served his country with distinction and sadly paid the ultimate price. He was our true hero."

Following his death, Sig Bland's Commanding Officer, said:

"Signaller Wayne Bland was a superb soldier, full of character and a highly popular member of 16 Signal Regiment. He joined the Regiment from training as a Driver Lineman in September 2006 and instantly fitted in, as only a 'Liney' knows how; with a laugh and huge sense of fun.

"Wayne's death is a huge tragedy, but he was a committed soldier who understood the risks and the importance of his work, as do his friends and every soldier in the Regiment."

*Lt Col Justin Hodges,*

Commanding Officer, 16 Signal Regiment

**VALE - ALAN BARKER  
Former Sgt. (Chief Clerk), 124 Sig Sqn.  
Former WO1 RSM, 1 Sig Regt.**

The question arises, will the real Alan Barker take one step forward. In the 1960's this infantry private patrolling the jungles of Malaya would have stepped forward for inspection and later in the 70's, the hard bitten, driven WO1 would have lead the parade doing the inspection. Over the past 20 years this man of God would preach Bible prophecy behind many a pulpit.

He was a very complex character, was always up front, fair-dinkum and open to learn, to change and be true to himself. It was these characteristics that moved him, on leaving the

army to seek out a young Pastor and demand that he justify his Christian faith and belief. That pastor was Rev. Tim Hall, who is now a well known international evangelist.

That was how Alan Barker came to be a born again Christian. He was a dynamic, forceful and convincing minister of the Word of God.

*Prepared by Laurie Dawson and contributed by Dick Goodwin.*

*From Signal News, June 2008.*

**Vale - 2412192 Arthur George Hutchens  
709 Sig Tp, Vietnam 1967. 104 Sig Sqn Vietnam 1967-68  
DoB 18 November 1945  
DoD 3 August 2008**

It is with sadness that we have learnt of the passing of another valued former member of the Royal Australian Corps of Signals. Our thoughts are with his family, daughter Brooke and son Joel and their families, at this time.

Messages of condolence may be forwarded to:

Mrs Brooke Collett (daughter) & Mr Joel Hutchens (son)

E-mail: [colletts@westnet.com.au](mailto:colletts@westnet.com.au)

Regards,

*Ted 'Blue' Hawkins*

Phone 07 5499 3704

**VALE - Colin Reed  
110 Sig Sqn, Vietnam 1968-69  
DoB 1 March 1946  
DoD 3 July 2008**

It is with great sadness that we have learnt of the passing of another valued member of the Royal Australian Corps of Signals. He served with 110 Sig Squadron in 1968-69.

Messages of condolence may be forwarded to:

Daryl Martin, E-mail: [sudas@bigpond.com](mailto:sudas@bigpond.com), who will consolidate and pass them to the family.

I am sure that our thoughts are with Colin's family at this sad time.

*Ted 'Blue' Hawkins*

Phone 07 5499 3704

**Vale - David Tonge, RAINF & AALC, RMC Class of 1954**

I am sad to advise that David Tonge (RMC 54) passed away watching TV yesterday (14 Aug). David served with RAINF before taking a law degree and then being assigned to AALC. I have no other details.

BT

*Barry R Tinkler*

VALE Kevin (Mitch) Miller  
 110 Sig Sqn, Vietnam 1970-71  
 DoB 10 February 1948  
 DoD 13 August 2008

It is with sadness that we have been advised of the passing of another valued member of the Corps. He was well known to many and will be sorely missed. Our thoughts are with his family at this time.

Messages of condolence may be passed to his family:

Mrs Maybell Miller,  
 24 Mitchell Cres,  
 Portland, VIC, 3305  
 Phone: 03 5523 2783

E-mail: [kevin60@bigpond.net.au](mailto:kevin60@bigpond.net.au)

*Ted 'Blue' Hawkins*

Phone 07 5499 3704

Vale TX10288, M.W. MCDONALD OAM.  
 25 Feb 1923 - 8 Jan 2008

Monty M<sup>c</sup>Donald's daughter advised us in March of the passing of Monty. He had served in Darwin in the 101 Lt A/A Regiment and later with Z Special on Fraser Island. He was born in Launceston and joined the Corps at age 17 and was discharged on 26 Mar 1946. Monty was finance manager for Webster Woolgrowers and retired in 1983.

We extend our sincere condolences to Tonia and Michael and their families.

*From Signal News, June 2008*

Vale – Ronald Warhurst  
 110 Sig Sqn Vietnam 10 June 1970 – 24 September 1970

It is with sadness that we have learnt of the passing of another of the Corps old and bolds to that great parade ground in the sky under the ultimate RSM.

Our thoughts are with his family as this time.

Messages of condolence may be forwarded to his family:

Mrs Maureen Warhurst,  
 4 Dulnain St.,  
 Mt Martha. VIC. 3934  
 Phone: 03 5975 7132

*Ted 'Blue' Hawkins*

Phone 07 5499 3704

Vale – From RASigs Ass'n (Vic)

We regret to advise the passing of the following which have been brought to our notice:

VX 147480 CPL Arthur Charles DOWELL  
 19 Line of Communication Signals  
 Served 16 Dec 1943 - 23 Nov 1945  
 Died 14 Apr 2008

VX36521 SIGMN Kevin McDONALD  
 SIGS 8 AUST DIV  
 Served 16 Jul 1940 - 17 Jan 1946  
 Died 5 May 2008

VX121725 SIGMN Francis James SHEEHAN OBE  
 44 Heavy Wireless Group  
 Served 9 Feb 1943 - 10 Sep 1946  
 Died 7 May 2008

VX109478 (V310492) SIGMN Alan McLEAN  
 4BDE SIG SECT  
 Served 9 Jan 1942 - 20 May 1946  
 Died 20 Apr 2008

VX105681 (V340169) SIGMN George Henry RADFORD  
 D Sect SIGS 3 AUST DIV  
 Served 10 Aug 1942 - 24 May 1946  
 Died 1 Jun 2008

VX86011 CPL James Oswald POLLARD  
 19 Line Section  
 Served 7 Jul 1942 - 3 Jul 1946  
 Died 22 Jun 2008

VX118587 WO1 Kevin James McNAUGHT  
 3 DIV SIGS, SOUTHERN COMD SIGS. 3 AUST CORPS  
 SIGS, SIGS 6 AUST DIV  
 Served 25 Nov 1942-9 Jan 1946  
 Died 5 July 2008

*Peter Waller*

President  
 RASigs Ass'n (Vic)

VALE - Wayne Hackett  
 Wayne Hackett of Ballina  
 ex 104 Sig Sqn  
 24 May 2008

*Lest We Forget*



### Errol Hazlewood

Our former Treasurer, Errol, is back in hospital. His condition has deteriorated to the extent his doctor has admitted him to Wahroonga Sanatorium where he is likely to be for at least 10 days. His condition relates to heart, kidneys, blood pressure, circulation in his legs and fluid retention. Once these conditions are stabilised, Errol requires an operation to treat a leg ulcer. Mind you, he was very cheerful after the usual greeting of, "How are you?", with the response of "Shithouse!" We wish Errol a speedy recovery.

### Leon Sharpe update 07 Aug 08, Ex 8 Sig Regt

Leon is currently hospitalised on the sunshine coast and is receiving blood transfusions and oxygen, whilst a loss of white blood cells is being investigated; he is too weak for visitors. His stay is to be extended for a few weeks but the good news is it is not thought to be Leukaemia.

### *Ken Myers*

Barry Billing, 110 Sig Sqn Vietnam 1967-68 & 1970-71 update as at 20 Aug 08.

Barry's cancer operation last week was successful and has been discharged from hospital, today. His chemotherapy will begin soon.

Messages of support can be sent to:

Barry Billing

Phone: 02 9453 2758

Mobile: 0419 845 350

E-mail home - [baza1@bigpond.com](mailto:baza1@bigpond.com) or

E-mail work - [vaanswadvocate@bigpond.com](mailto:vaanswadvocate@bigpond.com)

Regards,

*Ted 'Blue' Hawkins*

Phone 07 5499 3704

### Tony Rickards

(ex-LT 130 Sig Sqn Mosman)

I recently had lunch with Tony Rickards, at his place because he has been house bound recovering from an Arterial Crucial Ligament operation to repair a tear at the ankle. Tony expects to recover in time then, hopefully, to get his other hip replaced. He has a recurrence of his brain tumour; it looks like the surgeon did not get it all when he operated some years ago. Tony is reconciled to the loss of sight in his right eye.

*Michael McEvoy*

### 217459 Geoffrey Allan Sanders, 104 Sig Sqn Vietnam Geoff's Transplant Update

For those who are not aware, Geoff recently underwent a DOUBLE LUNG TRANSPLANT.

Messages of support should be sent direct to:

Bev Orr

[orrfamily@bigpond.com](mailto:orrfamily@bigpond.com)

Regards,

*Ted 'Blue' Hawkins*

Phone 07 5499 3704

### Brian Egan Aussie Helpers

5th August 2008

Hello fellow Aussie Helpers,

Our founder Brian Egan was diagnosed with a brain tumour and underwent surgery last week to remove the tumour in the Mater Hospital in Brisbane. Brian is recovering but has a long way to go. Brian has lost the hearing in his left ear and has nerve damage which may take some months to heal and repair.

Aussie Helpers,

PO Box 405,

Charleville, QLD, 4470

Phone 1300 665 232

Fax 07 4654 3264

E-mail [admin@aussiehelpers.org.au](mailto:admin@aussiehelpers.org.au)

Web [www.aussiehelpers.org.au](http://www.aussiehelpers.org.au)

## Association Matters

### Royal Australian Signals Association (NSW) Inc.

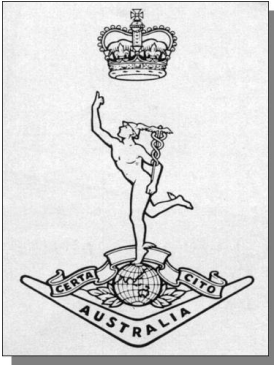
#### NOTIFICATION OF 2008 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This document, along with a nomination form for committee, has been added as an attachment at the end of *THURUNKA*.

### Royal Australian Signals Association (NSW) Inc.

#### FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2008

This document has been added as an attachment at the end of *THURUNKA*.



# CORPS MATTERS

RASIGS Corps website: <http://www.defence.gov.au/army/RASIGS/default.htm>

## RASigs Reunion Vietnam November 2009

Firstly, please note my e-mail address for the reunion is

[gregg.dickson@rasigsvietnam.com](mailto:gregg.dickson@rasigsvietnam.com)

Secondly, the web site is located at

[www.rasigsvietnam.com](http://www.rasigsvietnam.com)

### Notes

At time of writing...

1. The registration page isn't working as yet as we are waiting to add PayPal to the page.
2. You cannot download the Visa application at the moment.
3. There are a couple of names and photos missing off the committee, namely Ernest Hawley ex 110 Sig Sqn and Alan Davis ex 5 Sig Regt.
4. The guest book has yet to be added.
5. The Memorabilia page is still to

have the items and prices inserted, just waiting on the logo to be finalised.

Prices will be a lot cheaper than in Australia, e.g. Polo shirts USD\$12, baseball caps USD\$5.00, Stubby holders USD\$3, etc...

I have received over 100 names so far of interested parties to the reunion. It is definitely going ahead and I hope you like the programme.

I will advise when the web site is fully operational. Unfortunately the web master is bogged down with a huge amount of work and we are on his list.

This being a non profit event any profits derived from the reunion will be donated to the Loreto Vietnam Australia Program - an Australian Children's Charity in Vietnam. It is

run by the Program Director Miss Trish Franklin from Victoria who has been in Asia for over 13 years working with the kids. The Concert Party will have a raffle attached with all proceeds going to this charity...

NOTE: Just to let you know some of the airfares likely available. I have secured return flights for myself from Saigon to Adelaide, for the SA Reunion, for under AUD\$800, including taxes.

Hope to see you all here in Vietnam from 5th to 12th November 2009.

*Gregg Dickson*

Chairman,

RASigs Reunion Vietnam November 2009

## 1 Sig Regt Birthday preparations

### Information request

In 2010 the 1st Signal Regiment will be celebrating its 50th birthday.

Preparations are underway to ensure that the year is marked with a number of suitable activities, many of which will feature pomp, ceremony and pageantry. This correspondence concerns a task a little more down to earth, but none the less extremely important for the Unit and the Corps.

The Unit currently has a history room which contains photos from times past featuring unit members on various activities. In order to enhance this collection and maximise the utility of

the current holdings two requests are being made, and I ask those currently holding RA Sigs unit appointments to disseminate within their commands as able:

1. If past members of 1 Sig Regt have any photos, or indeed video, of Unit personnel or activities that they would wish to be incorporated into the Unit History display could they be forwarded to myself with suitable detail included as to the activity and people involved. I can arrange duplication and return if required. Any other suitable items for donation to the Unit history collection would also be welcomed.
2. If anyone has any knowledge of the current history collection at 1 Sig Regt could they please contact me? The photos on display seem to have been catalogued at some stage and have been

numbered, however no one knows of or has in their possession a register providing details etc. Confirmation of the existence or location of such a register would be appreciated.

Any contributions or assistance received regarding the above would be greatly appreciated.

Finally, if anyone knows the whereabouts or contact details for former RASigs Officer Steve Groves could they let me know.

Regards,

*Marcaus Muller*

Major

Executive Officer

1st Signal Regiment

07 3332 7637

0419 676 317

[Marcaus.Muller@defence.gov.au](mailto:Marcaus.Muller@defence.gov.au)

## RASigs Australian War Memorial Commemoration Ceremony, 4<sup>th</sup> November, 2008

Each year for the past ten years the RASIGS Association ACT has been holding a simple ceremony at the Australian War Memorial to commemorate those Sigs who have passed away. We hold the ceremony to coincide with Corps week and try to have it on a Tuesday.

This year's ceremony is on Tuesday, 4<sup>th</sup> November. Come to the AWM and join us. We would love to have serving or retired members, their families, friends and visitors join us.

The ceremony is simple and takes half an hour. We assemble at the AWM around 10.30 am and move up to the Hall of Memory where we say a few words about the ceremony. Visiting school group invited by the AWM join us. The AWM staff provides wonderful assistance and welcomes us on behalf of the Director.

We move into the Hall of Memories and form up around the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier with the school children interspersed between our members. Our Patron, MAJGEN Bob Woollard, and one other lay a wreath and we have the ODE, Last Post and Rouse. We individually lay a poppy on the Tomb. The ceremony is a very moving one and well worth attending. More information available from:

*Bill Wattam*

President RASIGS Assn (ACT)

Mobile: 0439 828 551

e-mail: [wwattam@bigpond.net.au](mailto:wwattam@bigpond.net.au)

## Current Issues

*We are introducing a new section in THURUNKA, where we aim to present current issues. This is an attempt to keep you informed with what is going on around us that may be of interest to us relevant to the Association. In this issue of THURUNKA we are listing the Government's Media Releases that we feel fall in to this category. There are also other items of topical interest....Ed.*

### Media Releases

*We are receiving many Media Releases from Government ministers, etc. via our network with other associations concerning the Defence Force, and particularly, veterans. We are unable to include all the content of these releases within the pages of THURUNKA, so what it has been decided is to list them for your reference with the relevant media contact details should you choose to follow them up. This by far is not the full list, but those brought to our attention considered relevant to us.*

*If you wish to receive the Minister's*

*media releases automatically by e-mail please go to:*

[www.minister.dva.gov.au/subscribe.htm](http://www.minister.dva.gov.au/subscribe.htm)

Media Release 104/2008 -  
Submissions sought for Mental Health  
Care Review

Saturday 9 August 2008. The Minister for Defence, Science and Personnel, the Hon Warren Snowdon MP, and the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, The Hon. Alan Griffin MP are calling for submissions to the review into Defence mental health care and the transition to non-military life. Media contacts: Kate Sieper (Warren Snowdon): 02 6277 7620 or 0488 484 689; or Laura Ryan (Alan Griffin) 02 6277 7820 or 0437 863 109.

Media Release - 106-2008 Swans Cats  
Clash - Australian Women and War

Friday, 15 August 2008. Saturday night's match between the Sydney Swans and the Geelong Cats will be a tribute to Australian women who have served this nation in times of war, the Minister for Defence Science and Personnel, Warren Snowdon, and the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin, said today. Media contacts: Kate Sieper (Warren Snowdon): 02 6277 7620 or 0488 484 689; or Laura Ryan (Alan Griffin) 0437 863 109; or

Defence Media Liaison: 02 6265 3343  
or 0408 498 664.

Media Release - Government  
Responds To Geoffrey Gregg Review

Wednesday 30 July 2008. The Department of Defence and the Department of Veterans' Affairs today released the three reports that make up the Gregg Review into the circumstances surrounding the service and suicide of Signaller Geoffrey Gregg. Media contacts: Kate Sieper (Warren Snowdon): 02 6277 7620 or 0488 484 689; or Laura Ryan (Alan Griffin) 02 6277 7820 or 0437 863 109.

Minister for Ageing - Funding for Carer  
Respite Extensions - 9 May 2008

9 July 2008. Please find attached a media release from the Minister for Ageing, the Hon Justine Elliot MP, in relation to funding arrangements for services under the National Respite for Carers Programme and Commonwealth Carelink Programme with expiring funding agreements:  
Media contact: Ruci Fixter Mobile 0415 359 023.

Media Release VA049 World-First  
Vietnam Veterans' Family Study Begins

Thursday, 22 May 2008. One of the most significant research programmes ever undertaken into the health of

Australia's veteran community is underway and veterans of the Vietnam War era and their families are being urged to get involved. Media inquiries: Laura Ryan 0437 863 109.

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#### Media Release VA055 - Twelve Queensland Students Awarded Long Tan Bursaries

6 JUNE 2008. The Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin, today announced 12 students studying in Queensland, all children of Vietnam veterans, will receive up to \$9000 each to help them complete their tertiary education. Media inquiries: Laura Ryan Mobile 0437 863 109

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#### Media Release VA062 - Government Delivers on Election Promises to Veterans

1<sup>st</sup> July 2008. A number of key election commitments will take effect from today, delivering improved entitlements to around 310,000 of Australia's veterans and their dependants. Media inquiries: Laura Ryan Mobile 0437 863 109  
[E-mail laura.ryan@dva.gov.au](mailto:laura.ryan@dva.gov.au)

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#### Media Release VA065 - 3 September Each Year to Be Known As Merchant Navy Day

4<sup>th</sup> July 2008. The Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin, today announced that the merchant seamen who served Australia in wartime would be officially commemorated with the proclamation of Merchant Navy Day. Media inquiries: Laura Ryan Mobile 0437 863 109.

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#### Media Release VA072 - Australian Women's War Service Finally Recognised

Tuesday, 22 July 2008. 91 years after the first military bravery awards were awarded to Australian women, the story of Australian women's service from the Boer War to now has been immortalised in a publication launched today by the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin. Media inquiries: Laura Ryan Mobile 0437 863 109

[E-mail laura.ryan@dva.gov.au](mailto:laura.ryan@dva.gov.au)

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#### Media Release VA074 - Extra \$4.42 Million Support for Australia's Veterans

Friday, 25 July 2008. The Rudd Government has provided a further \$4.42 million for more than 220 ex-service organisations across Australia to directly support the needs of local veterans and their families, the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin, announced today. Media inquiries: Laura Ryan Mobile 0437 863 109  
[E-mail laura.ryan@dva.gov.au](mailto:laura.ryan@dva.gov.au)

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#### Media Release VA075 - Sixteen NSW and ACT Students Win Long Tan Bursaries

Friday 25 July 2008. The Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin, today announced sixteen students from NSW and the ACT, all children of Vietnam veterans, will receive up to \$9000 each to help them complete their tertiary education. Media inquiries: Laura Ryan Mobile 0437 863 109.

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#### Media Release VA077 - \$94,000 for Naval Association to Support ex Serving Personnel

Monday 28 July 2008. The Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin, today presented the Naval Association of Australia with a cheque for more than \$94,000 to support their services to veteran and defence communities across Australia. Media inquiries: Laura Ryan Mobile 0437 863 109.

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#### Media Release VA078 Medals for Long Tan Veterans - New Tribunal to Examine Other Issues

August 14, 2008. The Rudd Government has today announced changes to military awards in response to the independent review of Battle of Long Tan recognition. Media inquiries: Laura Ryan Mobile 0437 863 109 E-mail [laura.ryan@dva.gov.au](mailto:laura.ryan@dva.gov.au)

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#### Media Release VA079: AFL Stars and Fans Helping Build Peacekeepers

#### Memorial

Friday, 15 August 2008. The Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin, is encouraging AFL fans to do double duty on Sunday. Media inquiries and interviews with Australian peacekeepers: Matt Burke 0408 307 824. Media inquiries for Minister Griffin: Laura Ryan 0437 863 109  
**Media Release VA080 - Scholarships for Children of Vietnam Veterans**  
Saturday, 16 August 2008. Vietnam veteran families have benefited from \$468,000 in tertiary education scholarships presented to 52 sons and daughters of Vietnam veterans in 2008, the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin, said today.

Media inquiries: Laura Ryan Mobile 0437 863 109

[E-mail laura.ryan@dva.gov.au](mailto:laura.ryan@dva.gov.au)

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#### Media Release VA081 - \$40,000 to Support Lismore Veterans and Their Families

Saturday, 16 August 2008. The Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin, today joined the Member for Page, Janelle Saffin, and local veterans in Lismore to mark Vietnam Veterans' Day and to hand over more than \$40,000 in funding from the Australian Government.

Media inquiries: Laura Ryan Mobile 0437 863 109

[E-mail laura.ryan@dva.gov.au](mailto:laura.ryan@dva.gov.au)

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#### Media Release VA083 - Independent study into suicide in ex-service community commences

Friday, 22 August 2008. The Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin, today released details of an independent study into the incidence of suicide in the ex-service community. Media inquiries: Laura Ryan Mobile 0437 863 109

[E-mail laura.ryan@dva.gov.au](mailto:laura.ryan@dva.gov.au)

## Medals Awarded For Long Tan Heroes

*Here we are including part of one of the media releases (VA078) as we consider it to be important enough. It has taken 42 years but finally recognition is being made of heroism and dogged defence by 'D' Coy 6RAR at the Battle of Long Tan. Our congratulations for finally receiving official recognition in an action that was so important in establishing our presence in South Vietnam. WELL DONE to 'D' Coy 6RAR ....Ed.*

Media Release VA078 Medals for Long Tan veterans - New Tribunal to examine other issues

Senator John Faulkner; Cabinet Secretary

Special Minister of State; Alan Griffin MP

Minister for Veterans' Affairs; Dr Mike Kelly MP

Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Support

27/2008 VA078, August 14, 2008

### Medals for Long Tan Veterans

#### NEW TRIBUNAL TO examine other issues

The Rudd Government has today announced changes to military awards in response to the independent review

of Battle of Long Tan recognition. It has also announced its response to the review of service recognition for RAAF Ubon (1965-68).

Cabinet Secretary, Senator John Faulkner, Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin, and Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Support, Dr Mike Kelly, have carefully considered the reports of the independent review panel and a number of public responses to the reports.

Key decisions, approved by the Governor-General, are:

Harry Smith, Commander D Company 6RAR, will be offered the Star of Gallantry (equivalent to the Distinguished Service Order), and Platoon Commanders Dave Sabben and Geoff Kendall, will be offered the Medal for Gallantry (equivalent to the Military Cross). This restores the original award recommended for Smith by his commanding officers, and accepts that the intention was to award Sabben and Kendall higher honours.

The strength of D Company 6RAR in Vietnam on 18 August 1966 will receive approval to wear the former Republic of Vietnam's Gallantry Cross with Palm Unit Citation Emblem.

Any other unresolved concerns regarding individual awards for Long Tan will be referred to the independent

Defence Honours and Awards Tribunal.

The Government will consider itself bound by the Tribunal's recommendations on these matters.

Implementation of these recommendations will properly recognise the individual and collective gallantry of these men on 18 August 1966, provide an equitable mix of awards for the battle, and will confer considerable honour on all the men of D Company 6RAR in Vietnam who fought in the Battle of Long Tan.

The independent panel reviewing service recognition for RAAF Ubon found that the close working relationship that Australian personnel developed with the Americans at Ubon, in Thailand, does not translate to an intention by the Government to deploy assets as part of the Vietnam War. The Government has accepted this finding. It is open for the Ubon Veterans to seek a review of this matter by the independent Defence Honours and Awards Tribunal.

The Government again thanks the panel for its work on these matters and supports most of its recommendations. On the matter of the South Vietnamese unit citation, we respect the panel's principled approach but have formed the view that the evidence of an intention by the former government of South Vietnam to offer this award is compelling.

## Changes to Service Pensions.

### Over 60 and still working, you may be eligible for a Service Pension!

From 20 March 2008 the Service and Old Age pensions income cut off limit changed to Single Pensioners \$1,513.50 p/f (\$39,351 pa) and Couples (Combined) \$2,530.50 p/f (\$65,793 pa). This will be good news to those whose partners are working and/or are in receipt of DFRB for Super.

Returned ex-service personnel can apply for the age service pension at 60 years of age, even if they are still working!

Contact the Sydney DVA and they will be able to tell you if you are eligible.

Members are reminded that subject of income and asset tests male veterans can obtain the Service Pension (same rate as old age pension) at the age of 60 even if they are still

working. It is important to have your super and investments in order prior to turning 60. Those under this age and cannot work more than 8 hours per week may be eligible under the Permanently Incapacitated provisions.

There were major changes made to the assets rules from September 2007. So you may now be eligible.

If you are over 60 and can not meet the income and assets test for the Service Pension, look at the Commonwealth Seniors Card. War Veterans only need to be 60 years of age and only have to meet very generous means and assets tests in order to receive this card. Ask for an application from your local DVA office.

*From 'The Furphy' VVAA (NSW) Branch, Far North Coast (NSW) Sub-Branch.*

# Military history

## Dedication of RASigs Commemorative Plaque AWM Canberra

Plaque Dedication Ceremony 1000 hrs Tuesday 19 August 2008

*On 19<sup>th</sup> August, 2008, history was being made with the dedication of the RASigs Plaque Commemorating the Corps' participation in the Vietnam War, at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra. Some of our members, including our President and Secretary, attended the Dedication and Dinner to help mark this occasion in our history Here Mike McEvoy reports on this significant occasion.....Ed.*

Chris Ballantine, President and Mike McEvoy, Secretary representing the NSW Association, attended the above dedication ceremony in the Western Courtyard of the Australian War Memorial. Since it was timed to follow Long Tan Day on 18 August, many Vietnam Veterans were able to attend the official ceremony to dedicate a bronze plaque commemorating service in the Vietnam War of units of the Royal Australian Corps of Signals. There was a large crowd at the Ceremony including a number of over 80-year-olds who had come down from Queensland and others from Victoria. Association members, LTCOL Tony Ballantine RFD RD (ret'd) and LTCOL Peter Emery RFD (ret'd), also attended the ceremony.

### Background

In 2006 the Director of the AWM, MAJGEN Steve Gower AO, introduced



### THE PLAQUE

The bronze plaque is 400mm by 300mm. It has been designed, manufactured, paid for by an anonymous donor and is under the care of the Australian War Memorial. It shows an RA Sigs "Jimmy" badge at top left and an RA Sigs colour patch top right.

a scheme to commemorate the service of military units in all wars fought by Australians. The scheme involves the dedication and the laying of bronze plaques in the Western Courtyard and so far several hundred have been laid. Our plaque will take its rightful place in this assembly and remain there for all

time so your children and their descendants will, on a pilgrimage to this most important National Monument, the Australian War Memorial, be able to identify your plaque and acknowledge your role in defending Australia. The Australian War Memorial authorities have complete control of this scheme and its implementation.

LTCOL Peter Murray (Ret'd) who was a driving force behind the project commented: "The Director (of the AWM) insists that only units be commemorated but by using all persuasive powers at our disposal, plus a little

corruption, bribery and the old-boy-net we succeeded in having Signals sub-units included. But there was a limit to our powers so those members of our Corps who served in non-Signal units have their service commemorated by plaques laid for those non-Signal units (e.g. AATTV has a separate plaque).

## Order of Service

The Assistant Director of the AWM Nola Anderson gave a speech of welcome, followed by Prayers by Chaplain Jim Cosgrove, Senior Chaplain, Army Headquarters. The Commemorative Address was given by Peter Murray, OC 547 Signals Troop, Vietnam, 1968.

The Plaque was unveiled by Major Bill Wattam (Ret'd) President of the RASigs Association ACT Branch and Master Dane Walmsley of the Pinjarra Senior High School, Western Australia, whose school group were visiting the AWM and Canberra. This is a tradition that the ACT Branch of the Association has undertaken in their activities. All present were invited to touch the Plaque so that the memories can be carried forward together and then grandchildren can also touch the plaque with the same links.

Chaplain Jim Cosgrove then

dedicated the Commemorative Plaque. The Ode was recited by Major Philip Perman OAM (Ret'd) OC, 110 Signals Squadron, Vietnam 1968-1969.

There followed the Last Post, One Minute's Silence then the Rouse and the National Anthem played by the RMC Band and sung by the Australian Rugby Choir.

Closing Prayers were prayed by Chaplain Jim Cosgrove.

The 'Thank and Farewell' was given by Brigadier Neil Horn (Ret'd), Second in Command, 104 Signals Squadron, Vietnam 1969-1970.

Overall the Ceremony was conducted with great dignity, reverence and went very well thanks to the organisers: Peter Murray, Neil Horn, Phil Perman and Bill Wattam with great support of the staff from the Australian War Memorial.

After the ceremony, morning tea was served in the Courtyard Gallery then AWM official Guides took small groups on abbreviated tours of the AWM,

including a visit to the newly opened Vietnam exhibit hall.

The Plaque is expected to be laid in the Western Courtyard in the next few weeks, so if you are planning a visit, contact the AWM to enquire if it has yet been laid.

I recommend a visit to the Vietnam exhibit hall, the displays and audio-visuals are brilliant and provide a good insight into the situation in Vietnam during the years 1965-1972.

The night of the Plaque Dedication all personnel, partners and guest attending the dedication were invited to gather at Olims Canberra Hotel from 16:30 hrs for drinks followed by dinner and there was a big roll up of old friends. It was a casual gathering and we ended up seated with the CO and OCs of the units in Vietnam to hear some of the stories of that era."

*Mike McEvoy*

*Here is the transcript of the speech made by LTCOL Peter Murray (Ret'd) at the dedication. I think it says it all...Ed.*

*The LTCOL begins....*

**Ms** Nola Anderson, ladies and gentlemen, members of the Royal Australian Corps of Signals - past and present - on behalf of the ACT Branch of our Association, I welcome you to this service, the Dedication of the Commemorative Plaque to recognise the sacrifice and service of the members of the units of the Royal Australian Corps of Signals - there was nothing "sub" about us - who served during the Vietnam War from 1965 to 1972.

Many of you have travelled long distances to be here. Thank you for coming. Your attendance does you great credit because it proves that you are still prepared to put your service to your country before personal interests. And my comments apply doubly to those who have accompanied you yet are not members of our Corps for they are here to support you and in supporting you prove they know exactly what mateship is.

I extend a special welcome to the students of the Pinjarra Senior High School of Western Australia. It is wonderful for us to continue our tradition of sharing our War Memorial experiences with young Australians.

I welcome Brigadier Mike Milford, current Head of the

Signal Corps, and all other uniformed Signal Corps members present today. Sir, the fine accomplishments of Signals men and Signals women deployed in dangerous missions overseas, make us very proud of them. And it is very warming to see uniformed members of the Corps standing there with old soldiers.

It would be remiss of me not to extend a special welcome to all ex-members of my old Vietnam unit, 547 Signal Troop, and I wholeheartedly do so. We have at least five octogenarians here today. Three of them - Jim, Hugh and Andy - came from Toowoomba, Queensland. Apparently Jim flew with Qantas to show his aristocratic tastes, Hugh drove his car to show his independence and Andy jogged cross-country to get here. Ladies, if you want to see who the fellows of 547 are ... well, they are the good looking ones!

There are three very special ladies sitting in the front row today who we also welcome. They are special because each of them is a sister of one of our men who were killed in Vietnam. They are.

Dorothy Keogh, twin sister of Denis Abraham, Alison La Spina, sister of Denis Donnelly and Lyn McHale, sister of Alexander Young. All soldiers were members of 104 Signal Squadron.

Ladies, thank you so much for participating in this dedication. Your attendance here today shows courage in a sister's love.

Let me now turn to our Plaque. I want to read part of it.

*(Continued on page 14)*

# FYI

## FOR YOUR INFORMATION

DISCLAIMER: The thoughts and ideas and any views expressed in the articles of *THURUNKA* are those of the contributors and are not necessarily those of The Royal Australian Signals Association (NSW) Inc. or the staff of *THURUNKA*. Nor are we able to attest to the accuracy of the information so contained. While contributions are welcome not all of them can be published. Those published may be edited for length and clarity. Contributions are acknowledged as from our source, unless otherwise informed. Contributions cannot be returned unless arrangements are made with the Editor prior to or upon submission of the contribution for publication. We welcome contributions and thank those who contribute to the pages of *THURUNKA*.

### RASIGS websites reviewed

The following RASIGS websites can provide additional information on RASigs and related matters:

RASIGS (Australian Government) <http://www.army.gov.au/RASIGS/default.htm>

RASIGS Association (South Australia) <http://www.rasigs.com/index.htm>

RASIGS (dedicated to RASIGS in general - Mal Beaton) [www.rasigsforum.org](http://www.rasigsforum.org)

RASIGS (dedicated to RASIGS in general - David 'Buddha' Winch) <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~rasigsau/index.htm>

RASIGS (dedicated to 103 Sig Sqn Vietnam) [http://groups.msn.com/103SigsSqnVietnam/\\_homepage.msnw?pgmarket=en-au](http://groups.msn.com/103SigsSqnVietnam/_homepage.msnw?pgmarket=en-au)

RASIGS (dedicated to 103 Sig Sqn - Simon Woolley) <http://www.103sigsqn.com/>

RASIGS (dedicated to 104 Sig Sqn Vietnam - Denis 'Rabbit' Hare) <http://www.au104.com/>

RASIGS (dedicated to 126 Sig Sqn) <http://www.cdoassoc.com/126SigSqn/>

Regards,

*Ted 'Blue' Hawkins*

Phone 07 5499 3704

### HELP WANTED

243287 Ronald John Laurence - SVN 18  
MAR 71- 12 FEB 72

When Ron Laurence was with 110 Sigs in SVN he was detached as the Tech Sgt to 104 Sig Sqn at Nui Dat. This was roughly in Mar/Apr 71.

He explains that he ripped his back delivering POL and Rations to the shelter on the top of Nui Dat. He is trying to make a DVA claim but cannot remember who was on the top of Nui Dat, to whom he was delivering the "stuff".

Does anyone remember it happening or remember him complaining of this injury and would they be prepared to write a Stat Dec for Ron?

If anyone can help would they please e-mail Ron?

All replies direct to:

Ron Laurence

[rjlaurence@optusnet.com.au](mailto:rjlaurence@optusnet.com.au)

## Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

**Latest on the National RASigs Reunion Adelaide for November 2008.**

*Update 25 August 2008....Ed.*

We have well over 303 persons already registered for the Reunion and the event is looking good.

The RASigs Corps hierarchy has approved the Reunion and the Corps Director, Special guests; Corps Committee, Commanding Officers, RSM's and SSM's of Signals units around Australia are all invited. We have the Princess Anne Banner for our

Formal Parade; this will be conducted by 144<sup>th</sup> Signal Squadron as part of the celebration of the "Bestowing of Royal upon our Corps 60 years ago in November".

We are holding a Formal Dinner during the event and this dinner because of numbers, is being held in a function centre that charges only all inclusive pricing. We have organized the Army Band for the night and between the meal, the drinks and the Band we believe it will be a night to remember. All n all it is going to be a great event, please don't miss out.

If any of you are in a position to help the RASigs Reunion with sponsorship, product of any kind or just

know someone that might help us out, please let one of the committee know or e-mail me [bruce@adelaide5star.com.au](mailto:bruce@adelaide5star.com.au)

I hope that you are all going to make the effort to attend this special get together and hopefully catch up with some good friends from the past and present.

Thanking you in anticipation

*Bruce Long*

President,

RASigs Association (SA) Inc

Mobile: 0417 227 533

Email: [bruce@adelaide5star.com.au](mailto:bruce@adelaide5star.com.au)

Web: <http://www.rasigs.com/index.htm>

## ITEMS MISCELLANEOUS

*Blue Hawkins has advised us of the following. If anyone knows the whereabouts of the following persons or any other relevant information, please contact the person and ask them to contact the enquirer directly....And 'Blue' in all cases.*

### Keeper of the RASIGS contact dbase

Ted 'Blue' Hawkins  
23 Belcher St  
CABOOLTURE QLD 4510  
Phone 07 5499 3704  
e-mail: [hawkins2@aapt.net.au](mailto:hawkins2@aapt.net.au)

*Thanks...Ed.*

## Search and Find

### Searching for MAJ Bruce Atherton (RASIGS)

Ex-sapper Major Russell Wade is involved in a submission before the recently announced Honours and Awards Tribunal for the award of an ASM for service in PNG post 1975. He is compiling a list of those who would be eligible for the award, if it is approved. He is particularly keen to track down RASigs Major Atherton, who served with him in PNG in 1983-1984.

If YOU have contact information for the above member, please advise: Ted Hawkins [hawkins2@aapt.net.au](mailto:hawkins2@aapt.net.au) (for our RASIGS contact dbase) and

MAJ (ret) Russell Wade (RAE)  
[russell.wade@dwe.nsw.gov.au](mailto:russell.wade@dwe.nsw.gov.au)

Anyone else who believes that they would have an entitlement should contact Russ also.

### Searching for WO2 Alan James Williams

37063 (Temp) WO2 Alan James Williams, 709 Sig Tp SVN 1965-66; and 110 Sig Sqn SVN 1967-68  
If YOU have contact details for the above member, please advise: Carolyn McMahon (nee Williams - daughter of member above)  
14 Woodward Rd  
Landsborough Qld 4550  
Phone 07 5494 8721  
Mobile 0414 778 471  
E-mail [jayana@iprimus.com.au](mailto:jayana@iprimus.com.au)

### Searching for Mick Urqhart

Mick Urqhart, late 1950's early 1960's era. If YOU have contact details for the above member, please advise: Albert Grulke  
Phone 03 5966 2085  
E-mail: [agrulke@bigpond.net.au](mailto:agrulke@bigpond.net.au)

### Regards

Ted 'Blue' Hawkins

### New Contact Details Denis Hare

RSTT 216465 WO1 (ret) Denis Charles (Rabbit) Hare, 104 Sig Sqn, Vietnam. Please note Denis' new contact details for your records:  
Denis & Colleen Hare  
PO Box 115  
(7 Sharwill Crt)

Glass House Mountains QLD 4518  
Phone 07 5438 7512  
E-mail [dhare@au104.org](mailto:dhare@au104.org)

### Website Lawrence Dawson

Another website from an old Sig, 18615 LT Lawrence Dawson, 110 Sig Sqn Vietnam 1967-68 - <http://www.healthyeageingformula.com/>  
Please take the time to check it out and tell him what you think of it.  
All replies direct to:  
Laurie Dawson  
Mobile 0418 349 317  
E-mail: [lauriedawson@bigpond.com](mailto:lauriedawson@bigpond.com)  
Laurie also welcomes contact from old friends.

### New e-address for Neil Westwood

17903 WO2 (ret) Neil Duncan Westwood, 110 Sig Sqn, Vietnam, 1968-69.  
Change of E-mail Address  
Please note change of e-mail address - effective immediately:  
New Email: [neilwestwood@bigpond.com](mailto:neilwestwood@bigpond.com)  
Neil welcomes contact from old mates.

### New contact details Bruce Fitzsimmons

213836 WO2 (ret) Bruce James (Bilko) Fitzsimmons, 547 Sig Tp Vietnam 1968  
Bruce (Bilko) Fitzsimmons  
6 Aberdeen Ave  
Maryborough QLD 4650  
Phone 07 4121 7396  
E-mail [brucefitzsimmons2@bigpond.com](mailto:brucefitzsimmons2@bigpond.com)  
Bruce welcomes contact from old friends.

*(Continued from page 12)*

## Memorial Dedication speech

It starts, "Dedicated to the Sub-units of the Royal Australian Corps of Signals Vietnam 1965 - 1972" and it ends with the words, "In memory of those who served and especially those who fell. Lest we forget."

It names the independent Signals units which served during the Vietnam War. They were 527, 547 and 709 Signal Troops and 103, 104, 110, 127, 145 and 152 Signal Squadrons. In all

7,500 men from Australia's Signals Corps served in the Vietnam and they represented 15% of the total force, no mean contribution. Initial planning for the Vietnam War grossly underestimated the requirement for communications personnel and I have little doubt that lapse is still the case.

But what is this plaque? What does it represent? I think it is a connection to our past - some of it good, some bad. A connection to a life we experienced forty years ago when we were younger, leaner and stronger.

For the sake of our students from Pinjarra Senior High School I mention that our war was fought in Vietnam, a tropical country, hot and humid. It is 7,000 kms away, to the north-west, in that direction (he pointed) Who could ever forget the heat, the humidity, sandbags, steel pickets and barbed wire, sentry duty on the perimeter on a black night, your feeling when a twig snapped, red dust which turned to mud after every shower, monotonous diets and a total lack of privacy? Who could

*(Continued on page 16)*

# Tail-end Charlie

## A Tribute to SIG Sean McCarthy

From CDF ...

1. Following the tragic loss of SIG Sean McCarthy in Afghanistan I have received a number of important messages of condolence on behalf of the ADF. I want all members of the ADF to be aware of the support received by our deployed task forces and in particular for the McCarthy family.

2. The ADF has received messages of condolence from:

- A. The Governor General;
- B. The Prime Minister on behalf of the Government;
- C. The Leader of the Opposition;
- D. The Minister for Defence;
- E. The Opposition Spokesperson on Defence;
- F. The Afghanistan Embassy in Canberra;
- G. HQ US Central Command;
- H. Chief of Defence Staff UK;
- I. Chief of Defence Force NZ; and
- J. Many of the Canberra diplomatic missions on behalf of their Governments.

3. On behalf of the ADF I thank these distinguished individuals, allies

and organisations for their support.

4. I wish to draw to the attention of all members of the ADF one additional message. On the afternoon of 9 Jul 08 I received a call from the Dutch Chief of Defence, General Peter van Uhm, passing on the condolences of our allies in Oruzgan province, but more importantly passing on his own thoughts and prayers. General van Uhm lost his own son Dennis in a very similar IED attack in April of this year and knows the great sense of loss being experienced by the McCarthy family and Sean's mates. Our shared loss brings us even closer together as allies in Afghanistan and as like minded democracies.

5. The ADF is held in great esteem due to the efforts of all members. Our thoughts remain with the McCarthy family as they await Sean's Return to Australia. To those currently deployed - thank you for your ongoing efforts and sacrifice. You are constantly in our thoughts. CDF.

### Biography - Sean McCarthy

SIG Sean Patrick McCarthy was born on January 5, 1983 in Auckland, NZ.

He enlisted into the Australian Defence Force (ADF) on July 10, 2001.

Posted to 7 Signals Regiment on July 14, 2003.

Posted to (Special Air Service Regiment) SASR on January 15, 2007 and was an active member of the regiment up until his death.

Operational service includes:

- Special Operations Task Group (SOTG V) Afghanistan, 2007
- Operation Astute in East Timor, 2008
- Redeployed to Afghanistan, 2008

Awards and commendation for service:

- SOCAUST commendation
- Australian Defence Medal for service
- International Coalition Against Terrorism Clasp
- Afghanistan Campaign Medal
- NATO Medal

## Father honours modest digger Sean

July 15th, 2008

**DAVID** McCarthy had always known his son Sean had been a good soldier, but he has only just been able to learn of the extent of his bravery.

As Mr McCarthy's tear-filled eyes turned towards the sky, he spoke for the first time about his signaller son, who was killed by a roadside bomb in Afghanistan while on duty with the Australian Special Air Service.

Speaking from his Pacific Pines home, Mr McCarthy said that because of the secrecy of some of the work his son had done, he had never heard of the occasions when six medals had

been awarded to the 25-year-old.

"We were able to learn a lot more about him. I know he's my son and I know we have lost him but he did some things... those guys are doing some things over there...they are real heroes," he said, "and particularly the commendation he got while he was over there in his first tour of duty and the actions he took under fire.

"I was lucky enough to speak to some guys who were actually there with him (on the first tour) and you're listening to these SAS guys tell you very factually what happened and you think

*(Continued on page 16)*

## Father honours modest digger Sean

he was in the middle of it and he received a military commendation for his actions which saved a lot of lives.

“So we didn’t know anything about it and Sean, his nature was he wouldn’t tell you anything.

“He got six medals, NATO medals and all sorts of things and he never said anything about them.

“Even as a kid at school, the girls would come home and they’d pass a maths test and they’d be running up the drive, but Sean, you wouldn’t know, you wouldn’t know what he did.

“(He was) very, very quiet. He didn’t say too much, he just did his job and did it very, very well.

“He was in the wrong place at the wrong time.”

Mr McCarthy said his family would get the medals on the day of Sean’s funeral. “We will be presented with the medals along with the brief on what they relate to,” he said.

“We don’t know what they are, but yeah, I’d trade them all (to get Sean back).”

Signaller McCarthy’s body will arrive home today at the Amberley RAAF base where a memorial similar to the one held in Afghanistan, known as a ramp service, will be held.

Mr McCarthy said messages of condolence on a ‘Facebook’ site dedicated to Sean had helped the family cope with their grief.

“There are people on there who obviously never knew him or never met him but they have been touched by it all,” he said.

“It really has helped with our loss, that support there from

the country and people who never knew him who all said sorry.”

“We have been reading all of these messages and, to all of you, thank you for taking Sean into your hearts, keep him there as that’s the place he can protect you from, as he was doing when he lost his life.”

A statement was also released by the family including sisters Leigh, 21 and Clare, 19.

“We are struggling to come to terms with the sudden loss of our beloved son and brother, Sean Patrick McCarthy, who was killed last week while on duty in Afghanistan,” it read. “We would like to thank our family, friends, Sean’s army mates, his school friends and members of the public for their support and caring at this difficult time. “That support has reinforced to us just what Sean meant to so many people and the impact he had in his short time with us.

“Sean Patrick ~ he was very proud of his middle name ~ was lucky enough to find a career that he loved and was very passionate about. We know that he will be sorely missed by his fellow soldiers just as we, his family, will miss him dearly. He will always live on in our hearts.

“We wish to pay particular mention to the soldiers who were on patrol with Sean that day. We extend our gratitude to those we know did everything they could for Sean. Our thoughts are with you.”

## *Lest We Forget*

*From Ted ‘Blue’ Hawkins*

*(Continued from page 14)*

### Memorial Dedication speech

forget the “wocker-wocker” of a Huey helicopter, the crack of outgoing artillery at night, a burst of machine gun fire in the distance... never explained. And the rain! For those who have never experienced a monsoonal downpour let me just say that it poured down so heavily that when rained outside the tent, then believe me, it rained inside the tent!

Most of us arrived in Vietnam with only a few personal possessions so we soon learned to share what little we had. In turn our mates shared what they had with us and very soon we were sharing other things - our fears, our hopes and our troubles. Out of that sharing came a need for each other and

real mateship grew. And that has brought us together again today to participate in the dedication of this plaque. It represents all that is good in us.

I have spoken of the hardship of life in Vietnam but not of enemy action because it is not a subject most soldiers wish to discuss. Suffice to say that as Signalmen we did not encounter the enemy as much as our Infantry mates. That was not our job but we always knew that suddenly we might be called upon to cease our communications work and fight off an enemy attack. And sometimes that happened. The fear that placed in us still lingers in most.

And now I return to the plaque one last time. I ask that before you leave today, please come and touch your

plaque. Touch it to increase the power of our dedication. It is our plaque, the Signals Plaque, the Troop and Squadron plaque, the Next of Kin’s plaque. It will represent our best qualities in this sacred place for generations to come and at the moment you touch it today, recall the service you gave forty years ago. In forty years from now, one of your grandchildren will come here to the War Memorial and bring with him or her, one of their grandchildren and together they will kneel down and touch the plaque too and in doing so be touching you and acknowledging they know that once upon a time you gave a part of your life to your country.

*Thank you....*

# ROYAL AUSTRALIAN SIGNALS ASSOCIATION (NSW) Inc.

## FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2008

<b>INCOME</b>	<b>Last Year \$</b>	<b>This Year \$</b>
Members Subscriptions	2495	1930
Sale of merchandise	121	128
Interest Received	486	515
Sundry Income	41	106
Contra – Functions	315	130
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>3458</b>	<b>2809</b>

<b>EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>Last Year \$</b>	<b>This Year \$</b>
Newsletter	646	500
Merchandise	282	-
Admin & Allowances	442	496
Committee Expenses	315	381
Grants & Donations	435	250
Wreaths & Presentations	333	306
Depreciation	210	-
ANZAC Day Subsidy	-	450
Banners & Equipment	330	162
Contra Functions	705	-
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>3698</b>	<b>2545</b>
<b>Net Surplus/(Deficiency)</b>	<b>(240)</b>	<b>264</b>

### MEMBERS FUNDS

#### Represented by:

St George Bank Balance 30/6/08	\$13,638
Association Equipment	\$ 837
Merchandise O/H @ cost	\$ 914
<b>Total Members' Funds</b>	<b>\$15,389</b> (2007=\$15,072)

Chris Ballantine  
**President/Acting Treasurer**  
**21 July 2008**

STOP PRESS

Rumour has it that after the Sydney Memorial Day Service at The Cenotaph at 1100 on 11th of the 11th that the Signals contingent is going to re-convene at the CTA club further up Martin Place for an informal get-together and luncheon.

Should you be in the area why not attend not only the Memorial Service but also the luncheon?

# Royal Australian Signals Association (NSW) Inc.

## NOTIFICATION OF 2008 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Members are hereby notified that the Association's Annual General Meeting will be held at 1230 hrs, Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2008 at the Paddington /Woollahra RSL Club, Oxford Street, Paddington (opposite Victoria Barracks).

Written nomination for the below listed positions are to be received by the Secretary no later than cob Friday 14<sup>th</sup> November 2008.

### AGENDA

1. Apologies
2. Confirmation of previous AGM minutes
3. Matters arising from previous minutes
4. Correspondence relating to the AGM
5. President's Annual Report
6. Presentation of Annual Financial Statement and Auditor's Report.
7. Appointment of Interim Chairman
8. Election of office bearers
  - President
  - Vice-President
  - Secretary/Public Officer
  - Treasurer
  - Membership Officer
  - Editor Thurunka
  - Publisher Thurunka
  - Committee members
9. Appointment of Honorary Auditor
10. Annual membership fees for 2009/10.
11. General Business.

Michael McEvoy

Secretary  
RASigs Ass'n (NSW) Inc.

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### NOMINATION FORM 2008/2009

I wish to propose financial member .....for the position of.....

Signature of Proposer.....

Signature of Secunder.....

I agree to the nomination.....

Signature of Nominee

Post to Secretary, RASA (NSW) Inc, 13 Mitchell Road, Mosman, NSW, 2088