



# NZ GUNNER

Royal New Zealand Artillery Association Newsletter

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

**BY SHAY BASSETT**

Greetings fellow Members

As you will likely be aware, over the last couple of years your committee has been grappling with how best to provide more tangible support to our members.

I'm happy to say that we are continuing to make gradual progress on this front, and that is the focus of two of my submissions. It seems this subject is quite topical these days, with the RSA pushing hard at the national level to return to its roots and do far more in this space too – thankfully members of the RNZA Association can benefit from this, as the following articles explain.

Unfortunately the RSA's new direction has led to some quite open internal disagreement and discord, and while the RNZA Association may be an affiliate of the RNZRSA, I wish to reassure members that 'we do not have a dog in the fight'.

I'm sure many of us have views on the various aspects of this discussion, but that is a personal matter, and should not be allowed to impact on our organisation and how we choose to conduct our own matters.

Having said the above, your committee has decided that another more recent development in this area does require action. No doubt many of you recently received a letter from Veterans Affairs New Zealand (VANZ), or have heard in the news, about their cut backs to services.

A copy of the letter our Association received is enclosed later in the newsletter, and we will be responding to it by writing to the Minister of Veterans Affairs to express our concern.

### **ANZAC Day**

I will be representing The Association at the Wellington Citizens Wreath-Laying Service, Cenotaph Precinct at 0900hrs on 25 April. I will be laying a wreath with John McNicol, Secretary. I would be delighted if you could join me.

I am sure that many of you will be attending similar events in your local area. I do hope you enjoy reconnecting with old comrades whilst paying your respects to the sacrifices of earlier conflicts. Please take photos and send them to our Editor so we can all share.

**Shay Bassett - President**

**Q Store:**

For a wide range of RNZA and gunnery items

<http://www.rnzaaQstore@gmail.com> - The Association Q Store.

**Contact Us:**

RNZAA Website: [www.rnzaa.org.nz](http://www.rnzaa.org.nz)

President: Shay Bassett: SHAY.BASSETT@nzdf.mil.nz

RNZAA Secretary: John McNicol: rnza.association@gmail.com

Newsletter: Marty Coomber: martin.coomber.nz@gmail.com

Q Store: Craig Hewett: rnzaaQstore@gmail.com

**Donations**

Donations can be made to our account as follows:

Account name: RNZAA. Account number: 38-9007-0694501-00 Reference: Donation.

You can claim tax credits for donations of \$5 or more when the donation is made to an approved charity. The RNZAA meets the charity criteria. Receipts for donations are available.

## NEW LOGO

BY MARTY COOMBER



The Association has changed its logo to reflect the King' preference for the "Tudor Crown" which replaces the "St Edward's Crown" used by the late Queen Elizabeth II.

The King has also selected his Cypher which contains the Tudor Crown and his initial C intertwined with Rex (king) and III.

The Tudor Crown was made for Henry VII or his son Henry VIII and first referenced in 1521. It was decorated with emeralds, sapphires, rubies, pearls, diamonds and has been described as "a masterpiece of early Tudor jewellers art."

It was broken up and sold as individual parts following the execution of Charles I. The gold, when melted down weighted 2.8 kg.

Interestingly, one component may have survived. A figurine matching one of those on the original was discovered by a metal detectorist in an field on the route taken by Charles I on his retreat from the battle of Naseby. 🏰

# REMEMBERING THE BATTLE OF LONG TAN

**BY MURRAY BROOMHALL**

## Author's Note

The following address was given at the 2023 commemoration of the Battle of Long Tan on 18 August 1966.

## The Address

Good evening fellow veterans, distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am honored to have been asked to deliver this commemoration address on behalf of the members of 161 battery RNZA. I would like to thank the Ballina RSL for extending this invitation to the New Zealand Vietnam Veterans' Association.

Today's commemoration is about two events, the Battle of Long Tan and the return home of the last of the Australian service personnel who served in South Vietnam. Together with a brief summary of the involvement of 161 Battery RNZA in Vietnam.

I will turn my attention to the unique milestone being remembered today.

It is now 50 years since the last of the Australian troops came home from Vietnam.

Between 1962 and 1973 over 60,000 Australian and about 3800 New Zealanders served in the Republic of South Vietnam. Sadly, 523 Australian and 37 New Zealand personnel made the ultimate sacrifice and today we pause to honor to them.

But that was not the end of the suffering and loss. Once those men and women returned home many died either by suicide or from undiagnosed physical and mental issues as a result of their service. Many others continue to suffer although, I must say, the care and treatment being offered has improved immensely.

From my personal point of view, I have lost many good friends and mates.

There are many others who have disappeared over time, and it is only at reunions or funerals that an enquiry (Have you seen so and so lately) results in a somber response from someone present oh he died 6 months ago or no he is in palliative care.

The sad reality is many have chosen to isolate from society and their former comrades and have disappeared without trace.

Enough of the gloom and despair, the forgotten fact of the 60,000 who returned home, is their immense contribution to society over the last 50 years.

Once the service personnel returned home, they either continued to serve and formed the backbone of the armed forces for the next 20 years, or they returned to civilian life. It is in that area that I believe they have and continue to make the greatest contribution.

Not in their paid employment, but in their volunteering. The one thing service instilled in everyone who served is the ethos of service to others.

In the last 50 years the men and women who returned have contributed to society in a myriad of ways volunteering in all parts of society using the skills and leadership methods they learnt to assist in so many organizations.

To name a few:

- Mentoring other service personnel through organizations such as Mates for Mates and similar groups.
- RSL both local and National committees
- Red cross, Rural fire brigades, SES, school PTA , hall committees, regional councils, trade organizations, trade unions
- They have also contributed to politics with state and federal members. Some have stepped up to the highest office - The Governor general of Australia and state governors.

I will now turn my address to the relationship between 161 Battery RNZA and the Australian army in Vietnam.

Some of you may be aware that the connection between 16th Field Regiment and the Australian Army goes back to a time before Vietnam.

16th Field Regiment was the major ground force contribution from New Zealand to the Korean conflict and was in direct support of the Australian battalions during that conflict and was the direct fire support regiment for the 3rd Battalion during the battle of Kapyong.

The reason I have included this item is that when 161 battery was in direct support of D Coy at Long Tan at least 3 of the Senior NCO,s on the battery position on the 18th August were also involved in the battle of Kapyong.

During the Vietnam era 161 battery was there from July 1965 until it returned as part of the phased withdrawal in May 1971.

During that time the battery fired over 250,000 rounds of 105 mm ammunition.

The battery, but not always the FO parties, was involved in most of the major contacts and engagements during that time including Balmoral, Coral and Binh Ba.

The connection between the two armies is very deep and continuing, as in recent conflicts there have been members of 161 battery operating guns in support of Australian units as part of merged units from different countries.

161 Battery personnel have also been deployed as peacekeepers often in conjunction with members of Australian units.

From a personal perspective I was posted to Vietnam twice.

The first tour was from June 1966 until June 1967. During that tour I spent the majority of my time as a member of a forward observation party and was attached to several Australian units A Coy 6 RAR, D Coy 6RAR , A Coy 5RAR, A Coy 7 RAR.

Finally, I served with V Coy RNZIR, which was the a semi-independent Coy under direct control of Task force HQ, for most of their tour.

My second tour was from April 1970 until April 1971 during this tour is spent the first 8 months as the Battery Commanders Survey Sgt attached to Battalion HQ of initially 7 RAR then 9 RAR.

During the last 4 months I swapped positions with the other Survey Sgt and spent the remained of my tour as the Battery Survey Sgt responsible for the efficient running of the Battery command post.

During the first tour I was a member of the FO party attached to D Coy 6 RAR during the Battle of Long Tan. There has been many books written about the battle and there is little I can add, except from a personal perspective.

At the time of the Battle the Battery had expanded from 4 to 6 guns in the previous two months, and from 3 to 4 members in each FO party.

The rotation system of replacing a percentage of the Battery personnel each month was started and the manning of the FO parties was being sorted out as most of the FO officers who had arrived in 1965 were going home and new FO officers were being placed with the companies.

I was one of the new members that had arrived as part of the expansion and was being used as a replacement for members of the various FO parties as they took R&R or went home, whilst the new permanent FO parties were formed.

Ten days before the battle of Long Tan I replaced Chris Cooper as he had developed jungle ulcers and needed treatment. It was clearly understood that this was a short-term placement as the long-standing FO party of Morrie Stanley, Willie Walker and Chris Cooper were all due to go home and I would be assigned to a permanent FO party in the coming weeks.

The day of the battle started off normally, there was a buzz of excitement in the company area for two reasons, the first was the result of the incoming mortar fire the night before.

The second and in our minds more important reason was that we had been given time off to go and see the concert that afternoon starring Little Pattie and other artists.



About 1100 hrs. that all changed. We were given the orders to saddle up and move out to relieve B Coy who had just found the Mortar Base plate position.

As we slogged our way up the slope towards Long Tan, we could hear the music from the concert and we were not amused.

We Met up with B Coy had a break and then the B coy patrol which included one of the other 161 bty FO parties started to return to Nui Dat and we moved out past the area were B Coy had turned back to meet us .

A short while later the first contact occurred and as the written record states all hell broke loose and the next 3 hours until A coy in the APC,s arrived was a very confusing intense time.

A few days later I was reassigned to what was to become my permanent position with an FO party comprising of Capt Tony Wales (who later became the adjutant General of the Australian army) myself and Tony Spring Rice and Alan Strang as the signallers.

This FO party was assigned to A Coy 5 RAR, and when they went home, to A Coy 7 RAR. When V Coy arrived in early May 1967 as we were the most experienced FO party we were attached to them. We stayed together until I came home in June.

The Battery over the time in Vietnam was a very professional unit and many of the members did two and in a few cases three tours.

The trickle replacement system adopted by the Battery worked well, as when the decision was made to commit the Battery, the total number of regular force gunners in NZ was about 140 all ranks which included about 60 odd in 161 Battery and the rest in various training units and Territorial unit cadres.

In order to get enough personnel to make up the initial deployment, a number of troops from other corps were asked to go, there was a large contingent of armored corps who went over mainly as signallers, and ASC drivers also came.

Once the dust had settled the training of replacements started and many of the infantry who had just returned from a two-year tour in Malaya/Borneo volunteered and were trained as gun numbers and command post staff/

An active recruitment of civilians was undertaken and there was no shortage of numbers over the time the battery was on active service. 🇳🇿



Wreath prestened by Murray at the Ballina Cenotaph on the day of the address.



Murray Broomhall, Alva Stanley (widow of Morrie Stanley) and Willie Walker at Long Tan commemorations in Brisbane, 18 August 2011.

# NEW ARRANGEMENT TO ACCESS RSA SUPPORT NETWORK

**BY SHAY BASSETT**

Earlier this year John McNicol, our Committee Secretary, and I met with two representatives of the RSA support network, John Hannan and Michelle Tebbutt.

This meeting was in response to an approach made by John, who some of you would have met when he accompanied Bryan Moles at our last Annual Reunion.

John is a Support Officer, working out of the Porirua RSA, and is well versed in navigating the bureaucratic pathways for obtaining assistance. He very kindly offered to perform this same service for RNZA Association members, and your committee has agreed to a six month trial of this arrangement.

Michelle is a Support Advisor with a focus on The Hub in Trentham and the RSA Employment Service, both of which are described in more details in the next article of this newsletter.

At the meeting John and Michelle explained that the RSA is focused on assisting current and former serving personnel, and their families, regardless of whether they are a member of the RSA or not.

The RSA also has a nationwide network that they are able to tap into in order to find their counterparts in areas our members live.

## Examples of Assistance

Examples of areas where they are able to assist members include;

- home visits to determine the assistance required, including providing a home safety assessment
- assisting with applications for Disablement or Surviving Spouse Pensions from Veterans Affairs
- referrals to appropriate services for assistance with hearing, health or to other services as required
- assistance applying for home help or help with personal cares such as showering

- information on how to apply for the Total Mobility Scheme for half-price taxi trips and mobility parking permits
- assistance with Medical alarms and funding
- providing an RSA visitor to call on you at regular intervals if required
- caring Caller, a free service through St John where someone will ring you each day
- assisting you to apply for RSA funding
- arranging a rates rebate.

## WINZ Assistance

Support advisors can also provide information about Work and Income (WINZ) assistance, including advice on how to transfer to a Veterans Pension.

This could include helping you to apply for a Disability Allowance or a Community Services Card.

You might be eligible to apply for things such as GP fees, prescriptions, medical alarms, podiatry, transport, physiotherapy, or lawn mowing under a Disability Allowance.

Both are income tested unless you are on a Veterans or Surviving Spouse Pension where you automatically receive a Community Services Card.

## Next Steps

If you have an interest in any of the above, please contact John:

Phone 04 237 7695

Mob 021 287 7695

Email [johnhannanwelfare@gmail.com](mailto:johnhannanwelfare@gmail.com)

Tell him that you are an RNZA Association member, and that you read about him in this newsletter. Once he has your address and other details, John should then be able to either assist you himself, or connect you with someone else who can within the RSA network. 🙏

# NEW PERSONNEL SUPPORT HUBS IN MAIN ARMY CAMPS

BY SHAY BASSETT

In a new initiative designed to assist current and ex-serving personnel, the NZ Army in partnership with the RNZRSA has established three new support centres in Linton, Trentham, and Burnham.

Each centre is called 'The Hub' and they are currently open once a fortnight to provide assistance with:

- **Finances.** Giving out grants based on need, to alleviate financial, medical and education hardship for NZDF staff and their dependants.
- **Advocating.** Advocating on your behalf for Government recognition, assistance, and redress.
- **Advice.** How to work with different government and community organisations, to gain timely, relevant, and accurate health, employment, and wellbeing advice.
- **Establishing connections.** Linking you up with Government, corporate and community groups that provide information, mentoring and ongoing support.

If you would like to visit 'The Hub' in your area, call the number for the Camp below, and ask to be put through to the local Regional Support Centre. From there they should be able to either confirm when The Hub will be open, or put you through to someone that knows.

- **Linton** 06 352 9099
- **Trentham** 04 527 5999
- **Burnham** 03 363 0099

## RSA Employment Service for Current and Former Service Personnel

All current and former service personnel, and their family, are now able to access free employment support from the RSA.

You do not need to have deployed on operations, or even be an RSA member. The RSA has a number of Veteran Employment Advisors (VEA) that can help connect you with support in;

- translating military experience into civilian skills
- preparing a CV.
- presentation and interviewing preparation.
- Vocational training.
- job options and permanent employment
- assistance in navigating through government and non-government support
- health and well-being services.

For further information, you can email a VEA by area as follows:

### Northland, Auckland, Bay of Plenty, Waikato, Taranaki, Manawatu, and Taupo

- Email: [veanorth1@rsa.org.nz](mailto:veanorth1@rsa.org.nz)

### Hawkes Bay, Wairarapa, Wellington, and Kapiti

- Email: [veawellington@rsa.org.nz](mailto:veawellington@rsa.org.nz)

### South Island

- Email: [veasouthisland@rsa.org.nz](mailto:veasouthisland@rsa.org.nz)

Alternatively, you can register online at: [www.rsa.org.nz/get-support/career-transitioning](http://www.rsa.org.nz/get-support/career-transitioning)



# CHANGES AT VETERANS' AFFAIRS

**BY JOHN MCNICOL**

Fellow Gunners,

Many of you have probably received a letter similar to the one below, which was addressed to our Association, regarding suspension by Veterans' Affairs New Zealand (VANZ) of the Veterans Independence Programme (VIP) service for those who do not have qualifying operational service, or do not have injuries from their time in uniform prior to 1 April 1974.

This was unexpected and is no doubt disappointing to many of you.

As a result, the Committee will be writing to the Minister of Veterans Affairs to express our unease with this situation. VANZ has indicated that this will be reviewed in March 2025, however, we believe there is still a need to express our concern and get it 'on record'.

You should know that the RNZA Association has attended every roadshow and forum run up and down the country by VANZ in recent years, and that we will continue to do so. Aside from the benefits of recruiting new members and selling merchandise, this effort maintains and raises our profile as an organisation serious about veteran matters. As a result, VANZ now acknowledges the RNZA Association as a trusted body that they can consult with, regarding veteran related issues.

In closing, we strongly encourage all members regardless of service, to register with VANZ if you have not done so already.

**The Committee, Royal New Zealand Artillery Association Inc.**

*From the Head of Veterans' Affairs, Bernadine MacKenzie  
Kia ora and greetings to you all.*

*I am sending this email to let you know that, from today, Veterans' Affairs is making a change to the Veterans' Independence Programme (known as VIP services). This is the programme which offers services to help veterans live independently in their own homes – things like lawn mowing, house and path washing, gardening, and medical alarms. I would be grateful if you could bring this information to the attention of the veterans in your organisation.*

## **What is happening**

*There will be no change to these services for those veterans who have an illness or injury which VA has accepted as being the result of their qualifying military service. If they already have a VIP service, it will go on as before – and if they need another service, this will be available to them.*

*However, from today, we are suspending any new services for eligible veterans who do not have an illness or injury which VA has accepted as being the result of their qualifying military service.*

*This applies only to new services – if a veteran does not have a service-related illness or injury, but is already receiving a VIP service, then this will be grandparented – however, no new services will be available.*

*The only exception to this policy is for those veterans without accepted conditions, who have already made an application to us, and who are aged over 90 or have a terminal condition. We will continue to progress their applications as a transitional arrangement.*

**Why this is happening**

I appreciate that this will not be welcome news to a lot of veterans. However, the decision is not one we have taken lightly. I can assure you that it isn't being done as a cost-cutting or money-saving move.

We have done it so we can better focus on ensuring that those veterans who have been injured or made ill because of their service can readily access their entitlements. The number of claims from these veterans, and the complexity of their claims has been increasing.

Veterans needing help for service-related illnesses or injuries are sometimes having to wait for more than a year before their applications can be processed, and they can start getting treatment or rehabilitation. We need to give priority to them.

We've therefore decided to redistribute some of our resources in VA. Those that are now available to arrange VIP services for veterans who have no accepted conditions will instead be used to help reduce the waiting times for veterans who do have service-related conditions and who are applying to VA for support.

This suspension will be in place for one year. After that time, we'll review it, and if resourcing allows, it may be possible to offer it again.

**If you or a veteran you know is affected by this change**

If you don't have a service-related condition, but have applied for VIP services, and haven't yet received them, your application will lapse. If we offer the services again next year, you will be very welcome to apply again.

In the meantime, however, we are recommending two things:

- If you think you might have a condition which is associated with your service, we suggest you see your GP. You may be able to make a claim to VA. If you do, and it is accepted, you'll be assigned a case manager, and your case manager can arrange VIP services for you.
- There are other government agencies who may be able to provide you with support. As a start, we recommend that you call Seniorline or check their website [www.seniorline.org.nz](http://www.seniorline.org.nz).

Seniorline is a national information service to help people navigate the health system and other Government support agencies. You can call them on 0800 725 463 between 8:00am and 4:00pm or email them at [seniorline@adhb.govt.nz](mailto:seniorline@adhb.govt.nz).

The RSA may also be able to provide assistance. (See earlier article - Ed.)

# GUNNER COMEDY CRUISE 16 - 19 MAY

**BY SKIN FRANCIS**

Fellow Gunners,

The Gunner Cruise has progressed to the point that Jill and I are booked and from earlier responses there are 16 people that have replied to me expressing their interest in coming on the cruise. I am looking forward to catching up with anyone else who would like to come along.

I am the first POC - Please contact me at: [skin\\_frances@outlook.com](mailto:skin_frances@outlook.com)

## Comedy Cruise i524

Departs Brisbane about 1600 Friday 16 May returning about 0630 Monday 19 May, 2025.  
3 Nights at Sea on a P&O Short Break

Spend a few nights at sea as some of Australia's best comedians take the stage each night.

Enjoy the Comedy Cruise Gala (a must-see), an up close and personal chat to the comedians and a cheeky adults-only shows in the Sit Down Comedy Club, there's something to make everyone smile.

Includes meals, entertainment, fitness centre and Pools.

See the Website for more details: [www.pocruises.co.nz/cruises/comedy/i524](http://www.pocruises.co.nz/cruises/comedy/i524)

Christopher has said: "For more options, feel free to send an email or call me from 8:30am to 5:30pm , Sydney, Mondays to Fridays."

### Some Cruise Information

Military Benefit of \$50 onboard spending money, these are the requirements for first time cruisers:

1. Active personnel currently serving by providing their Regiment number or Service Number.
2. Ex-serving personnel, including discharged and retired personnel, by providing relevant documentation which shows evidence of having served in the ADF or NZDF, such as military superannuation or pension statement from the Military Super scheme, the DFRDB scheme, the DFRB scheme, or the DFSS scheme (New Zealand) or Certificate of Service.

#### Prices range from (AUD):

Net Total single or twinshare: \$958. (Interior)  
Net Total single or twinshare: \$1,148. (Some view)  
Net Total single or twinshare: \$1,418 (Premium Balcony)



Prices are as of 07Mar 2024 (prices and cabin availability are subject to change)

Deposit per passenger: \$100

Please contact Christopher for the latest information

# FROM THE Q STORE

BY Q - CRAIG HEWETT RNZAAQSTORE@GMAIL.COM

Royal NZ Artillery Assn.  
New Style Polo shirt with the  
King Charles III Crown and Gunner patch



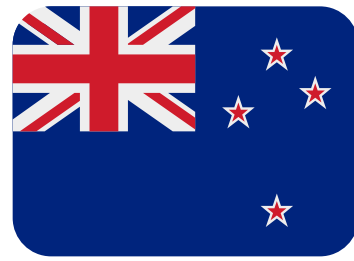
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Please email orders to:

The Assn Quarter Master  
rnzaaqstore@gmail.com

# LAST POST



- BEBAN, Andrew Robert. F1004599, RNZA, NZ Batt 3 East Timor. Passed away at Waikato Hospital March 21 2024, aged 45 years.
- SEARLE Wayne A. RF Cadet / RNZA. Passed away in Christchurch on 29 Feb 2024 following an accident
- INWOOD, Robin Frederick (Bob). 42091, Gnr, 161 Bty RNZA, Vietnam. Passed away on 28 February 2024 at Christchurch Hospital aged 78 years.
- NEVILL, Christopher John (Chris) JP. 206335, Sgt, 16 Fd Regt, RNZA, Korea. Passed away peacefully in Wellington on 20 February 2024, aged 94 years.
- BROWN, Michael Henry CNZM, OStJ, ED. F822899, LBdr, 14th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, RNZA. Dean of Wellington. Army Chaplain RNZChD, and Padre 3 Fd Regt RNZA. Chaplain Commandant RNZChD. Passed away on 8 January 2024.
- MCDONALD, Paul Michael. 379794, 161 Bty, RNZA, Vietnam. Passed away peacefully on 9 December 2023.
- PAKITARA, Peter Hori Kaa. 40362, Cpl, 1 RNZIR Borneo, 161 Bty RNZA Vietnam. Passed away on 23 March 2021 aged 81.