

# Busy year and more to come

This year has been a particularly eventful one as all the major anniversaries approach the 90th Year.

My diary notes for November 2007 illustrate the diverse activities undertaken by us at ACT Branch and of importance are the various meetings held both at state and national level, representing your views.

## ACT Branch President's Diary History and the Vietnam War

**November 9** — *Australian War Memorial Lecture — 66th Anniversary Oration*: By invitation I attended this anniversary oration in the Australian War Memorial Telstra Theatre.

Introduced by the chairman of the AWM Council, Major General Clunies-Ross AO MBE (Rtd), and the AWM Director, Major General Steve Gower AO, the address was delivered by the AWM's Mr Ashley Ekins, Head of Military History.

Mr Ekins is the author of the final volumes of the Official History of the Australian Army in Vietnam.

Mr Ekins spoke of the controversy that surrounded Australia's military involvement in the Vietnam War. Impassioned debate has often clouded and still clouds rational discussion of some issues.

Forty years on, some aspects of that war can be viewed more clearly, although many myths and misconceptions still resist analysis.

Mr Ekins also discussed issues central to an understanding of Australia's longest and most divisive war and covered the recognised aspects for both sides of this continuing argument. He dealt particularly with the concept, "How can an official war history meet the challenges of such myths and misconceptions as well as the expectations of the diverse constituencies an official war history must serve?"

## Remembrance Day

**November 11**: The principal focus on November 11 in Canberra is the observance of Remembrance Day at the Australian War Memorial and shortly afterwards, for invited guests, the memorial service at the Embassy of France.

Both remembrance services are always well attended and supported.

The service at the Australian War Memorial was introduced by the master of ceremonies, Ross Symonds, and began with a guard of honour, drawn from Australia's Federation Guard, and the Band of the Royal Military College of Australia, taking up their positions on the AWM parade ground.

Guests of honour this year were the Governor-General, Major General Michael Jeffery AC CVO MC, and Mrs Marlena Jeffery; the then Prime Minister, John Howard, and Mrs Janette Howard.

On the arrival and seating of the principal VIPs the catafalque party, also drawn from members of Australia's Federation Guard, was mounted at the AWM Stone of Remembrance.

Hymns were led the Australian Rugby Choir accompanied by the Band



*Delivering the customary address by the State President of the RSL ACT Branch.*

of the Royal Military College.

The principal dignitaries laid wreaths, followed by senior representatives of the ACT Government and Federal Parliament, the Chief of the Defence Force and the ADF Service Chiefs, the Chairman of the Council of the Australian War Memorial, our RSL National President, then senior representatives of the Canberra-based Ex Service Organisations, the National President of the War Widows' Guild and the President of Canberra Legacy accompanied by junior legatees.

RSL National President Major General Bill Crews AO (Retd) recited the *Ode* and a bugler from the RMC Band played *Last Post* and *Rouse*. The large Diplomatic Corps representation laid wreaths on behalf of the citizens of their respective countries.

What has also become an important and meaningful part of the respects paid at the AWM commemorative service on Remembrance Day is the laying of flowers by young people at the Stone of Remembrance.

Poppies are placed by individual school students representing the youth of Australia.

## Embassy of France ceremony

An hour after the AWM Remembrance Day service an always moving ceremony is held at the Embassy of France, Canberra.

The welcome and a formal address was given by His Excellency Mr Francois Descoueyte, the Ambassador of France, followed by an address by the Ambassador of Belgium and the customary address by myself as State

## *RSL ACT's Stand To goes international*

The format of *Stand To* will be adapted to accommodate new ideas and personalised notices from sub-branches. We hope you will continue to enjoy reading it. A dedicated effort by ACT State Treasurer Mickey Michaelis ensured that the new-look first edition of the "independent" RSL ACT *Stand*

President of the RSL ACT Branch. [See text on previous page].

His Excellency Mr Descoueyte led the formal wreath-laying segment of the service, followed by senior representatives of the ACT and Australian Governments and Diplomatic Missions. Other senior representatives to lay wreaths were Mark Sullivan, Secretary of the Department of Veterans' Affairs; Air Chief Marshall Angus Houston AO AFC, Chief of the Defence Force and his three ADF Service Chiefs; Major General Bill Crews AO, RSL National President; Gary Brodie OAM, President of the RSL ACT State Branch; Major General Adrian Clunies-Ross AM MBE, Chairman of the Australian War Memorial Council; and Jack Petit, President of the French Veterans' Section of Canberra.

After the laying of wreaths, (*The Ode* is not recited at this service) a bugler from the Band of the Royal Military College played *Last Post* and *Rouse*, followed by the National Anthems of France and Australia. Invited guests then attended a reception at the Embassy residence.

## Conference

**November 18-21**: With State Secretary James Davidson I attended the scheduled RSL National Executive Conference at NHQ, joined by Senior Welfare Advisor/Advocate Arthur Craig, attended the NVAC sessions.

## Calvary meeting

**November 21**: ACT State Secretary James Davidson and I attended the annual meeting of Veteran Liaison Officers at Calvary Hospital with Mrs Sue

## From the President's Desk RSL ACT STATE BRANCH



*Gary Brodie OAM*

Hogan, the Executive Director of Nursing, and the senior Veterans' Liaison Officer, Mrs Sue McGuinness, and their associated support members.

It is always pleasing to receive reports from the Calvary staff on the excellent work being carried out by our RSL ACT hospital visiting teams that visit our hospitalised veterans and the services they are able to offer there.

Mrs McGuinness has a fine reputation not only as a RN but is highly regarded and respected as the Calvary Hospital Veterans' Liaison Officer, by the veteran community and their families, on the occasions when operations or treatments are required by veterans at this hospital.

I continue to receive excellent reports from the other hospitals where our RSL visiting teams are in attendance throughout Canberra.

## Season's greetings

I take this opportunity to join members of the ACT State Executive in wishing all members and their families a safe, happy Christmas and a prosperous and healthy New Year.

I thank you sincerely for your assistance throughout 2007.

It is through your continuing and selfless efforts that we have achieved much again for the veteran community we serve here in the ACT and through our overseas sub-branches.

## Death of Arthur Phillips

The Secretary of Gungahlin RSL Sub-Branch, Darryl Corbett, reports, "We regret to announce the death of our friend and member of the Gungahlin Sub-Branch, Arthur Phillips.

"Arthur passed away on 6 November 2007 in Calvary Private Hospital, aged 86.

"Arthur is survived by his daughters, Robyn, Lorraine and Cheryl, eight grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren.

"He was a long-serving member of the RSL and transferred from Coonabarabran to Canberra in late 2005. Arthur will be missed by all who knew him."

For more information please contact Darryl on 6242 5413 or email [dmandjdcorbett@optusnet.com.au](mailto:dmandjdcorbett@optusnet.com.au)

**Check Bulletin Board  
for what's on, who's  
who, and where it's all  
happening.  
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