

# Returned soldier honoured

A plaque acknowledging the repatriation to Australia of the remains of Lance Corporal John Francis Gillespie was unveiled at the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial in Canberra on Vietnam Veterans' Day, 18 August.

The remains of LCPL Gillespie were discovered in the Minh Dam Mountains (formerly Long Hai Hills), Baria Vung Tau Province in November 2007 and repatriated to Australia in December.

LCPL Gillespie was killed on 17 April 1971 when the helicopter in which he was travelling was shot down by enemy fire.

Heavy enemy activity in the area prevented recovery of LCPL Gillespie's remains before Australian forces withdrew from Vietnam.

The plaque was unveiled by family members of LCPL Gillespie and Peter Aylett of *Operation Aussies Home*, the group who found the remains in Vietnam. The names of the six Australians originally missing in action in Vietnam are set on three stone seats surrounding the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial on Anzac Parade.

Plaques commemorating the repatriation of LCPL Richard Parker and PTE Peter Gillson, were placed on the seat that bears their names and unveiled in the presence of their families on Vietnam Veterans' Day last year.

The remains of PTE David Fisher, Special Air Services Regiment, were located in the Cam My District of Vietnam in August.

As *Vet Affairs* went to print, planning was under way to repatriate PTE Fisher's remains to Australia.

Two Australians remain missing in action in Vietnam.



Prime Minister Kevin Rudd presented an embroidered shroud to LCPL Gillespie's family members, including his widow Carmel Hendrie, his daughter Fiona Pike and his grandsons, Ryan and Jordan Pike.



The plaque mounted on a stone seat at the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial on Anzac Parade, Canberra.

# Medals for Long Tan veterans

Long Tan veterans will receive medals following the findings of an independent review of Battle of Long Tan recognition.

The Australian Government announced the key decisions including that Harry Smith, Commander D Company 6RAR, would be offered the Star of Gallantry (equivalent to the Distinguished Service Order), and that Platoon Commanders Dave Sabben and Geoff Kendall, would 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.

In addition, 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.

The changes allow for the individual and collective gallantry of these men on 18 August 1966 to be recognised. They 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.

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.

The Australian Government also announced its response to the review of service recognition for RAAF Ubon (1965–68).

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

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

# Independent study into suicide begins

An independent study has begun into the incidence of suicide in the ex-service community.

The Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin, said the study would examine specific cases of suicide by ex-service members in recent years to help identify members who may be at risk.

"We know that war service can have both a physical and mental impact on the lives of service personnel. Physical impairment can be obvious; psychological injury is less so," Mr Griffin said.

"This government is determined to support veterans and ex-serving personnel who may suffer psychologically as a result of their service, however to do so we need a better understanding of the incidence and characteristics of suicide amongst this community."

Associate Professor David Dunt, epidemiologist and public health specialist, will conduct the study and is expected to report to the government by the end of this year.

Professor Dunt is also conducting a review of mental health care services in the Australian Defence

Force (see story page 4).

The suicide study will be conducted independently of DVA and the ADF. The terms of reference have been developed in consultation with the National Veterans' Mental Health and Wellbeing Forum.

The study will look at common contributing factors in recent cases, the incidence of suicide in the ex-service community, and what government agencies and the medical and allied health professions can do to support veterans under stress.

Submissions to the study will not be published. Members of the veteran and ex-service community can contribute to the study by email to [suicidestudy2008@bigpond.com](mailto:suicidestudy2008@bigpond.com) or by writing to PO Box 4145, Melbourne University Vic 3052. Further details are available at [www.dva.gov.au](http://www.dva.gov.au). Submissions close on 5 October 2008.

The *VVCS—Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service* can be contacted 24 hours a day, seven days a week on 1800 011 046.

# Changes ahead for partner service pension

Subject to the passage of legislation, eligibility for the partner service pension will change next year, affecting married recipients below age pension age who are separated, but not divorced from their veteran spouses.

This change will not affect you if you are over pension age. Age pension age is 65 years for males and currently 63 years and 6 months for females.

From 1 January 2009, eligibility for partner service pension will cease 12 months after the date of separation, or the veteran commences a new marriage-like relationship.

A spouse who is a member of an illness separated couple remains the partner of a veteran and therefore does not lose eligibility for partner service pension. Certain assessment criteria need to be met.

A couple who are illness separated must be unable to live together in a matrimonial home because of the illness or infirmity of either or both of them. They must continue to have a married or marriage-like relationship, even though they may be living in separate accommodation. For example, if one partner is in residential care, or if separation is as a result of the veteran's medical condition.

If a spouse and the veteran believe they should be assessed as an illness separated couple, please contact DVA as soon as possible to request a D9157 'Statement of Relationship – Couple living separately due to illness' form.

# Works complete at Le Hamel memorial



The Australian Corps Memorial Park at Le Hamel on the Western Front in France has been redeveloped with a new memorial and upgrades to the park's facilities. The park is again open to the public and the memorial will be officially rededicated on 8 November this year.

## Assistance to restore overseas memorials

Several privately-constructed memorials overseas have been restored with funding assistance from the Australian Government.

### Honiara, Solomon Islands

Survivors of the Second World War Battle of Savo Island attended the rededication of a memorial to HMAS *Canberra* in Honiara, Solomon Islands for the 66<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battle on 9 August 1942.

The memorial honours the ship's crew, including 84 who died when the ship was destroyed.

### Stadil, Denmark

A restored memorial commemorating the eight crew, four of them Australian, of a Lancaster bomber shot down in Stadil, Denmark after a bombing raid on Germany was unveiled in September on the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the crash.

## OFFICE OF AUSTRALIAN WAR GRAVES

### Fovant, United Kingdom

The Fovant Badges Society in England has restored the Australian Commonwealth Military Force Rising Sun badge carved into the chalk hillside at Fovant in 1916 by Australian regiments in memory of their comrades.

Storms in 2007 had badly damaged the carving.

For more information about these memorials or about the *Overseas Privately-Constructed Memorial Restoration Program*, visit [www.dva.gov.au](http://www.dva.gov.au) or contact the Overseas Memorials Grants Team on (02) 6289 6184 or 1300 13 1945.

## Repairs to Wagga cross

The weathered Cross of Sacrifice at Wagga Wagga War Cemetery was refurbished in June this year.

Some of the sandstone monument's blocks were replaced or dressed to correct blistering and de-lamination.

The mortar was replaced in the joints and the cross was thoroughly cleaned.



# Review of mental health care

The Government has commissioned an independent review of mental health care in the Australian Defence Force and the transition to civilian life.

The review, to be conducted by Associate Professor David Dunt, will assess existing mental health programs and support across the ADF and DVA and will advise on their effectiveness, service gaps and delivery

challenges. Professor Dunt is also conducting the independent review into the incidence of suicide in the ex-service community (story page 3).

The Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin, said that the review would be particularly helpful in examining the transition from military to civilian life and would assist DVA to provide services for younger veterans.

"With the number of recent deployments it is essential that Defence and DVA are well prepared to support those who have returned from active duty," he said.

Submissions to the review closed on 20 September.

The review should take about six months with a report due by mid-December 2008.

## Grants to benefit veteran community

Funding for community projects and initiatives that help improve the health and independence of Australia's veterans, war widows and widowers is available through the Veteran & Community Grants program.

Veteran & Community Grants help people to live a healthy, quality lifestyle and to remain living independently in their own homes. They also help to reduce social isolation, provide support for carers and improve access to community care services.

The program provides grants to eligible ex-service organisations, veteran representative groups, community based or private organisations for projects that directly support local veteran communities.

Projects that can be funded include programs to teach new skills including *Cooking for One or Two*, healthy living and computer skills courses, as well as social activities such as Day Clubs and Men's Sheds.

These projects help veterans, war widows and widowers access a range of programs that teach them skills to help them remain independent and active, particularly for the elderly living by themselves.

To find out more or apply for funding visit [www.dva.gov.au/health/grants](http://www.dva.gov.au/health/grants) or contact your nearest DVA office on 133 254 (for metropolitan callers) or 1800 555 254 (for non-metropolitan callers).

## Anzac Day Schools' Awards announced

Rosalie Primary School in Western Australia and Eudunda Area School in South Australia are the national winners of the 2008 Anzac Day Schools' Awards.

This year's entries—193 from schools across the country—were again outstanding and demonstrated that schools were continuing to be enthusiastic and imaginative in their commemoration of Anzac Day.

The annual competition is open to all Australian schools and

aims to promote awareness of Australia's wartime heritage and community involvement in commemorative events and initiatives.

Each year Rosalie Primary School holds a dawn service which often attracts more than 800 people. This year students studied the Australians' battles on the Kokoda Track during the Second World War, conducting their own trek on a re-created track.

Eudunda Area School students researched the war records of

the 27 First World War soldiers commemorated on the Eudunda Memorial. The students gave the proceeds of their booklet, *Eudunda's Lost Sons*, to the Eudunda RSL.

The Anzac Day Schools' Awards have been running since 2001 and are funded under the Australian Government's *Saluting Their Service* commemorations program.

For more information visit the Department of Veterans' Affairs website at [www.dva.gov.au](http://www.dva.gov.au)

## Pensions and allowances increase

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Asset limits have risen between \$5000 and \$10,000 for service pensioners and income support supplement recipients.

Income limits have also increased, allowing single service pensioners and income support supplement recipients to earn an additional \$6 per fortnight and those receiving partnered rate an extra \$8 per fortnight (combined) before pension payments are affected.

More information on the new pension rates is available from the Department of Veterans' Affairs on 133 254 or at [www.dva.gov.au](http://www.dva.gov.au)

### New pension rates

SERVICE PENSION	OLD RATE	NEW RATE	INCREASE
Single person	\$546.80	<b>\$562.10</b>	\$15.30
Couples (each)	\$456.80	<b>\$469.50</b>	\$12.70
War widow's pension	\$582.40	<b>\$598.70</b>	\$16.30
Income support supplement	\$163.20	<b>\$167.80</b>	\$4.60
<b>DISABILITY PENSION</b>			
TPI	\$970.50	<b>\$997.80</b>	\$27.30
Intermediate rate	\$658.50	<b>\$677.00</b>	\$18.50
EDA	\$535.60	<b>\$550.70</b>	\$15.10
100 per cent	\$344.80	<b>\$354.50</b>	\$9.70
10 per cent	\$34.48	<b>\$35.45</b>	\$0.97
<b>MRCA</b>			
Wholly dependent partners death benefit (weekly)	\$291.20	<b>\$299.35</b>	\$8.15
Special rate disability pension (weekly)	\$485.25	<b>\$498.90</b>	\$13.65