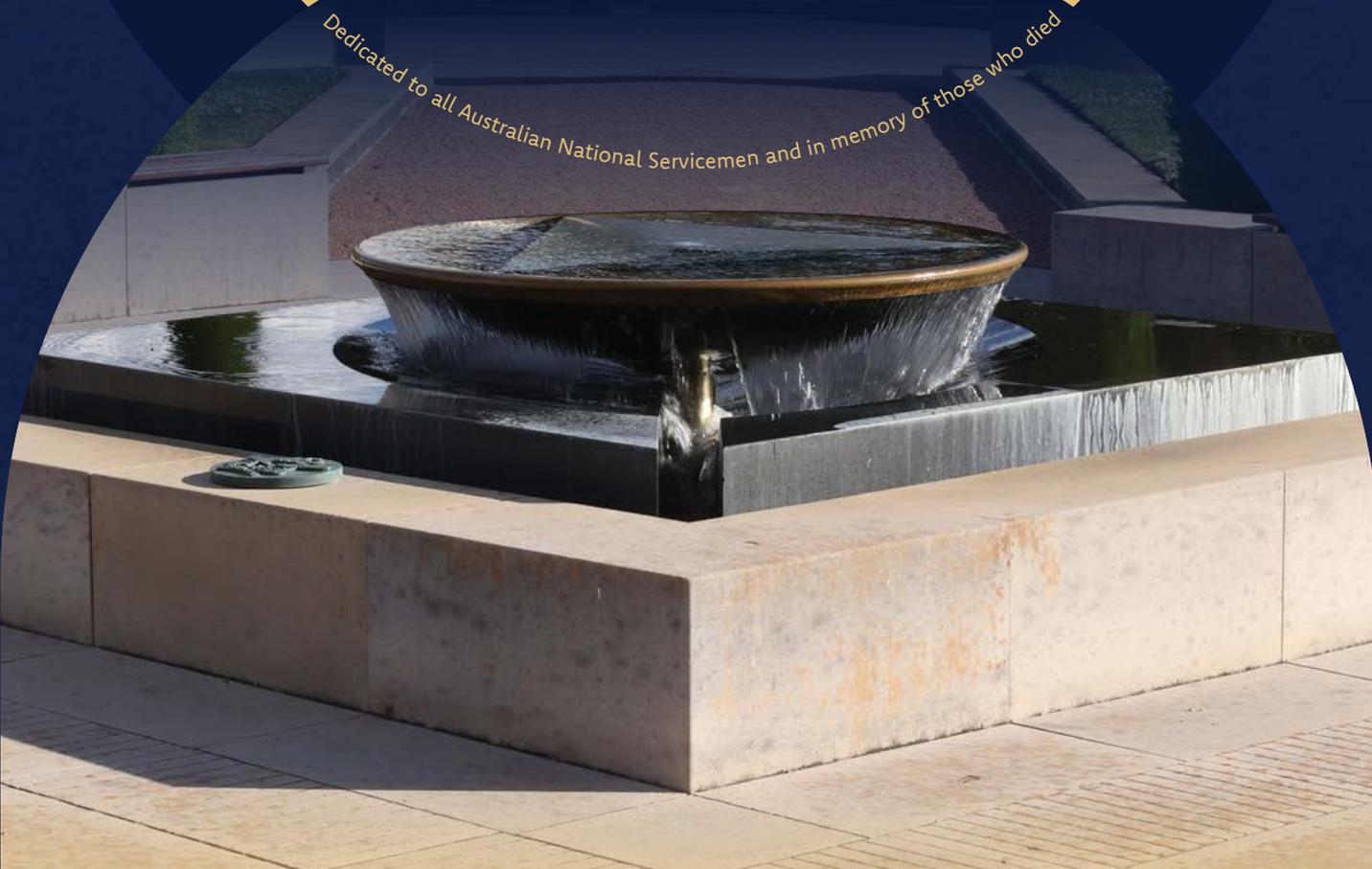


75TH ANNIVERSARY OF  
NATIONAL SERVICE  
1951-1972



*Dedicated to all Australian National Servicemen and in memory of those who died*



THE GREAT HALL, AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA | SATURDAY 14 FEBRUARY 2026



*National Service Memorial Fountain (DVA)*



**A message from**  
**HER EXCELLENCY**  
**THE HONOURABLE**  
**MS SAM MOSTYN AC**  
**Governor-General of the**  
**Commonwealth of Australia**

As Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief, and the proud daughter of a veteran, I am delighted to share this message of welcome to everyone commemorating the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of National Service. On this important anniversary, thank you – on behalf of all Australians – for your service and sacrifice under the national service schemes.

Australia's long history of commemoration encompasses gatherings, services and monuments, works of art, and hymns of remembrance. As Governor-General, it has been a privilege to attend many of these services and ceremonies, and to pay tribute to extraordinary national service, here in Australia and overseas.

Veterans and current service women and men know that military service under any circumstances – compulsory or voluntary – is an act of sacrifice. But the unique and enduring impact of compulsory military service, too often exacted a heavy toll. Disrupting lives, interrupting education and careers, and parting young men from their families and loved ones, its effects were wide-reaching and its consequences long-lasting.

The more than 280,000 national servicemen who served Australia at home and abroad between 1951 and 1972, made that sacrifice with honour, gallantry and courage. Each one – those who died, those who came home, and those who have often suffered from their service in the long years since – contributed significantly to the defence and preparedness of Australia in uncertain times.

Today, as we remember, reflect on, and celebrate Australia's history of national service, I am proud to represent all Australians, in promising never to forget all that our national servicemen gave, and gave up, for our nation.



*L/Cpl Ron Shoebridge and L/Cpl Stretch Bryan assist Pte David Riik to a helicopter for evacuation.  
Phuoc Tuy Province, Vietnam. 8 October 1966. (AWM COA/66/0877/VN)*



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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that this publication contains the names, images, words and stories of deceased persons.

# TIMELINE

## 1945-1946

End of the Second World War and start of the Cold War.

## 1948

### June

Outbreak of the Malayan Emergency.

## 1950

### June

Outbreak of the Korean War. Australia commits forces to both Malaya and Korea.

## 1951

### 17 March

*The National Service Act 1951* passed by the Menzies government.

### 12 April

First call up notice for the National Service Training Scheme (NSTS) sent out.

### 30 July

First intake of RAN and RAAF national servicemen (known at the time as 'trainees').

### 6 August

First intake of Army national servicemen.

## 1957

### 25 May

RAN and RAAF cease national service and length of national service is reduced.

## 1959

### 24 November

Menzies government ends the NSTS.

## 1960

### 26 May

*National Service (Discharge of Trainees) Act 1960* passed, discharging remaining national servicemen.

## 1962

### 24 May

Australian government announces first military commitment to the Vietnam War.

## 1963

### 20 January

Indonesia announces a policy of 'Konfrontasi' (Confrontation) with Malaysia.



RAAF  
national  
service trainees.  
Photographer, Ron  
Scorah, (1951-1955).  
(H99.206/2626. Argus Newspaper  
Collection of Photographs, State  
Library Victoria)



## 1964

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### 24 November

The *National Service Act 1964* passed by the Menzies government.

## 1965

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### 10 March

First ballot drawn for the National Service Scheme.

### 1 July

First intake of national servicemen.

### November

First national serviceman deployed overseas to Borneo during the Confrontation.

## 1966

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### March

Establishment of the 1st Australian Task Force in South Vietnam.

### May

First national service infantrymen arrive in South Vietnam with 5RAR. Other national servicemen begin serving in other units across Australia and overseas including South Vietnam, Malaysia (including Borneo), Singapore, and Papua New Guinea.

### 24 May

Private Errol Noack, 5RAR, killed in action, the first national serviceman killed in the Vietnam War.

## 1971

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### 8 October

Length of national service reduced to 18 months.

### 6 December

National service ended by the Whitlam government.

### 8 December

Discharges of remaining national servicemen begin.

## 1973

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### 21 June

Passing of the *National Service Termination Act 1973*.

## 1974

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### 22 November

Final national serviceman discharged.



Dedicated to all Australian National Servicemen and in memory of those who died

*Australian Vietnam Forces Welcome Home Parade,  
3 October 1987. (AWM PAIU1987/249.25)*



## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND





## AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL SERVICE: 1951–1972

*Between the youthful enthusiasm of the cadet and the doggedness of the wartime digger comes a curious creature called a ‘Nasho’.*

*Anon, 13th National Service Training Battalion,  
11th Intake, January–April 1955.*

National service represents a significant chapter in Australia’s military and social history. In the twentieth century, Australia had four separate schemes of compulsory military service, including two that were known by the term ‘national service’ during the Cold War. The National Service Training Scheme (NSTS) ran from 1951 to 1959 and then the National Service Scheme (NSS) ran from 1965 to 1972. Between these two schemes, more than 280,000 Australian men served in the armed forces and played a vital role in Australia’s defence. Their service affected every man, and their families. It was a momentous period of their lives and has continued to have a bearing in the years and decades that followed.

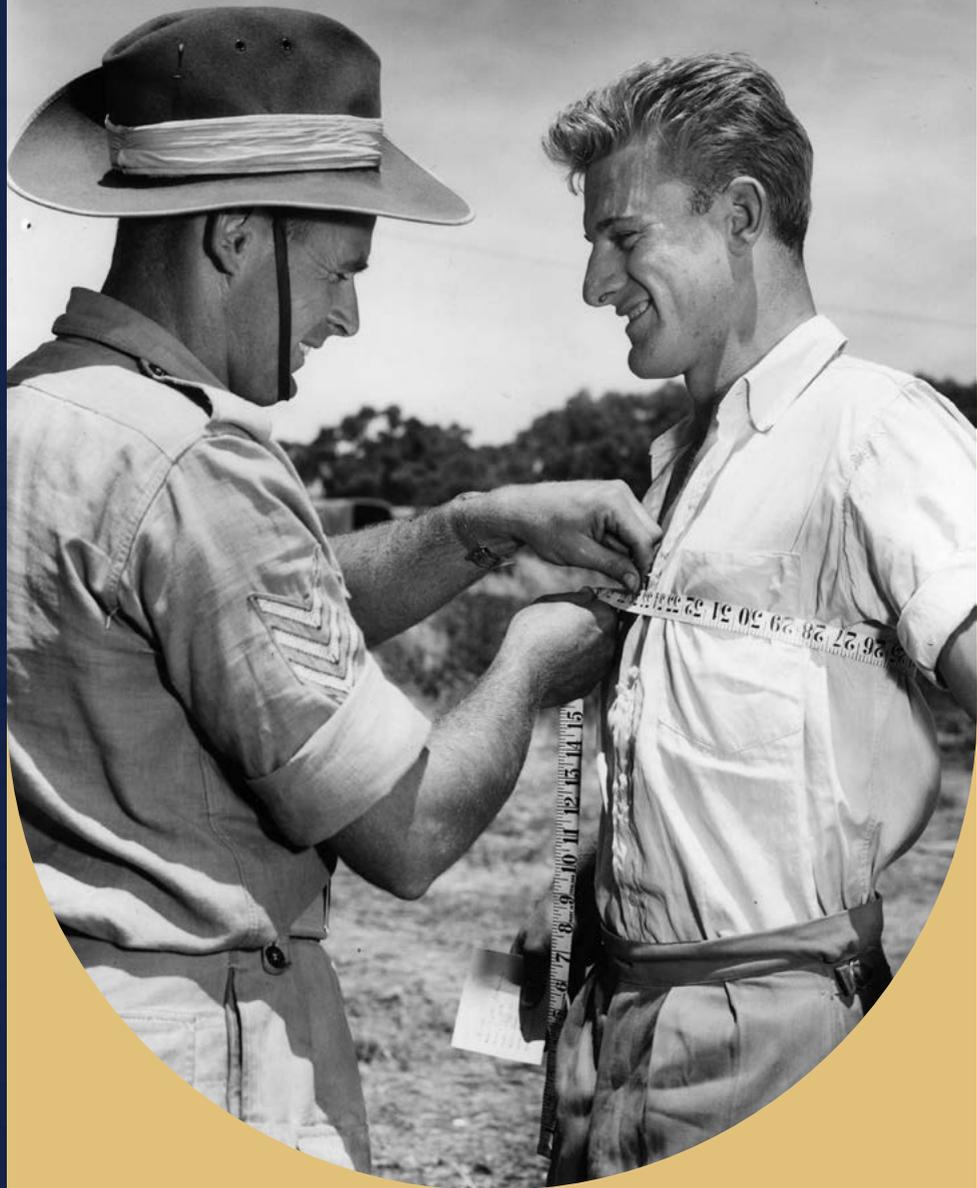
Though their service in the military was in most cases through compulsion, national servicemen, or ‘Nashos’ as they dubbed themselves, served honourably and made an important contribution to Australia’s defence during the uncertain years of the Cold War. Without national service, Australia could not have provided for the defence of the nation and its overseas commitments in the 1950s and again in the 1960s and 1970s.

*Pte Rodney Cox,  
Pte Gordon Stafford,  
Pte Neil (Pop) Baker,  
Pte Mark (Scrub) Minell and  
Pte Graham Irvine, members of  
8 Platoon, C Company, 6th Battalion,  
Royal Australian Regiment (6RAR).  
National Service intake July 1965.  
(AWM P06136.001)*

## Australia's early conscription schemes 1911-29 and 1940-46

The two Cold War national service schemes formed part of the now little appreciated but at the time vitally important, history of conscription in Australia. Australia's first scheme of compulsory military service was adopted in 1911 and ended in 1929. It required all teenage boys, aged 12 to 18 years, to register to undergo military cadet training while at school and then to serve part-time in the Citizen Military Force (CMF), which was also widely known as the Militia, until the age of 26. Men could not be forced to serve overseas, but the scheme contributed to Australia's readiness for the First World War, with many men who had received training under this scheme volunteering to serve in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF).

The second scheme began in January 1940 in response to the outbreak of the Second World War and a growing fear of a war against Japan. Within months, the scheme was expanded and it would eventually include all 18-35 year old men who were not in wartime 'reserved occupations'. Originally intended for the defence of Australia, legislation was amended so that conscripts could also serve in Australia's external territories of Papua and New Guinea. The scheme ran until 1946.



*Measuring up for tunics rather amazes old time soldiers,  
Sgt. L. Dowsett checks up Fred Dekes of Preston.  
(H98.105/4311. Argus newspaper collection of photographs, State Library Victoria)*

## National Service Training Scheme (NSTS) – 1951–1959

After the Second World War, Australia's armed services were dramatically reduced in size. The outbreak of the Malayan Emergency in 1948 and the Korean War in 1950 emphasised the low strength of armed services and highlighted fears about Australia's defence amidst the escalating Cold War. In response, in March 1951, the government of Prime Minister Robert Menzies passed legislation for a new scheme of compulsory military service, the National Service Training Scheme, specifically to bolster the defence of Australia.

The term 'national service' came from Great Britain, which had introduced a peacetime national service scheme in 1948. Menzies acknowledged that national service would be an imposition on the public and would come with a cost. In announcing the NSTS, Menzies called on the Australian people to make 'the greatest effort at defence preparation' that the nation had 'ever undertaken in time of peace.'

The NSTS required nearly all 18-year-old men in Australia to register for national service, which entailed 14 weeks of full-time military training or alternatively 20 weeks of naval or air force training, followed by up to five years of part-time service in the Royal Australian Naval Reserve, the Citizen Military Force, or the Citizen Air Force. Some members of Australian society were excluded from the scheme even though they had served honourably during the Second World War. Notably this included young men identified as Indigenous Australians although they were able to serve in the regular forces.

*RAAF national service trainees. Photographer, Ron Scolah, (1951-1955). (H99.206/2628. Argus Newspaper Collection of Photographs, State Library Victoria)*



For men liable for national service, deferrals were possible for those who would experience exceptional hardship, apprentices, university students, and conscientious objectors. However, the Government was loathe to grant these deferrals and vigorously pursued defaulters.

The NSTS was primarily intended to provide a core of semi-trained personnel for the Royal Australian Navy (RAN), the Australian Military Forces (AMF)—as the Army was called at the time—and the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF). The idea was that they could be called up for full-time service and receive further training if there was a national emergency. Nashos served in many different roles including, but not limited to, infantry, aircrew, cooks, military police, psychologists, teachers, engineers, radar or radio operators, drivers, and gunners.

The scheme also had the explicit aim of strengthening social cohesion in a world that many Australians saw as becoming increasingly divided. The NSTS's planners wanted national service to have a social, as well as defence function. As one instructor declared to a group of trainees, 'The training programme was designed to give an overall picture of service life. It provided also, all the ingredients necessary in the moulding of character and manliness, both physical and moral ... the true basis of good citizenship.'

It was hoped that national service would help break down barriers as there was 'an equality of service' which 'brings all classes together ... in circumstances that do much to promote understanding and goodwill'. National service taught 'young men the elements of self-discipline and comradeship, national pride, esprit de corps and a sense of citizenship'. Many Nashos felt that national service took good men and made them better citizens.



*Royal Australian Air Force, W/O Keith Issell of No. 21 Squadron showing national service trainees the workings of a Mustang fighter's engine. Ron Scoriah, (1951-1955). (H99.206/2630. Argus Newspaper Collection of Photographs, State Library Victoria)*



While the Nashos in the Army could not be compelled to serve overseas, recruits were given the choice of volunteering for foreign service if mobilised. In the RAN and the RAAF, Nashos were required to agree to potential overseas service in order to serve in the Navy or Air Force. Due to the increasingly technical nature of naval service, the Navy required six weeks of training at sea which saw Nashos serve aboard RAN ships both small and large. They served in the waters around Australia and some were on voyages that called into overseas ports including in New Zealand and Singapore. The RAN and RAAF intakes were small though, and the majority of Nashos in both these services served only within Australia. However, some Nashos were present at the nuclear weapons tests conducted on the Monte Bello Islands and at Emu Field and Maralinga.

National servicemen from the 1951-59 scheme did not see active service overseas unless they enlisted in the regular forces after their initial training had finished. At least three former national servicemen lost their lives on active service with the Australian Regular Army in Korea, another in Borneo during the Indonesian Confrontation, and seven in the Vietnam War. Regrettably, even for those who did not enlist in the regular forces, national service was not without cost. A number of men died during their national service as a result of accidents, illnesses, and other causes.

Many NSTS Nashos look back on their service with fondness despite, in many cases, having initial reservations. Nasho recruits found in their training unit a detailed cross-section of society, one that brought together young men from wildly different backgrounds and upbringings. Much as the politicians had argued, national service promoted social cohesion among the trainees. A consistent theme among these Nashos when recalling their time as trainees is the character-building effect of their service.

One Nasho noted that for these young men, living and working in close quarters cleared ‘a fog of narrow ideas’ and put their own lives into perspective. National service gave young men ‘a grounding in the value of teamwork and discipline’ which had a lasting influence. The commandant of the Rathmines RAAF training base noted at the passing out parade of the second 1954 intake that trainees were: ‘Broadened and matured by their associations and the loyalty and discipline taught them at Rathmines. Healthier, stronger, better equipped for their civilian careers ... [and] better citizens.’

By 1957 the NSTS had built the required core of trained reserves in the Navy and Air Force and both these services stopped accepting national servicemen. The scheme remained for the Army but it drastically reduced the number of trainees called up with each intake. As the threat of a new world war receded and the need for forces to be deployed overseas to such places as Southeast Asia grew, it became clear that the NSTS was no longer the best solution for Australia’s defence. In 1959 the scheme was discontinued. By then, more than 220,000 men had undertaken national service in the armed forces.

*‘Scran not half bad.’  
RAN national service  
trainees eating a meal  
afloat. (Naval Historical  
Society of Australia)*





## The National Service Scheme 1965–1972

Five years after ending the NSTS, the Menzies government decided to reintroduce national service. The *National Service Act 1964* was passed on 24 November 1964, allowing for the National Service Scheme (NSS) to be established. This new scheme was a response to the worsening regional security situation and the growing number of Australian military commitments, particularly in Southeast Asia. This NSS differed from its predecessors in some important ways. It was selective, not universal, meaning not every eligible man would be called up for national service; it was only for service in the Army; and those who were called up would be required to serve two years in the Australian Regular Army. But, most controversially, those called up would be liable for service overseas.

By the mid-1960s, Australia was facing security threats throughout Southeast Asia and the government was under pressure to commit forces to aid its 'great and powerful friends', the United Kingdom and the United States. Australia had become increasingly involved in British and American efforts to counter communist expansion in Southeast Asia through collective defence. These alliances meant Australia had to be prepared to deploy forces.

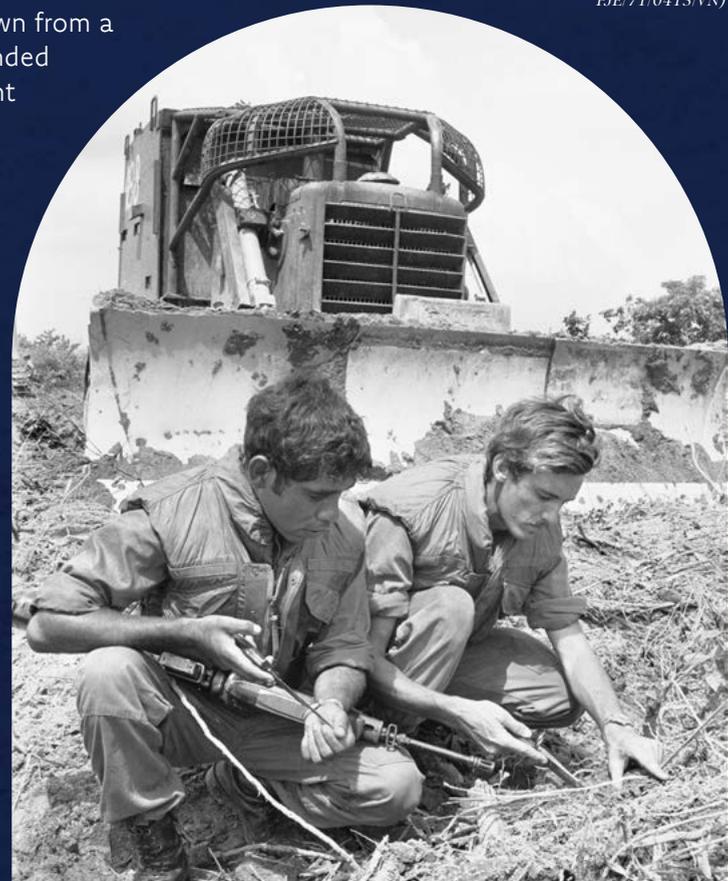
In 1964, when the Menzies government resolved to reintroduce national service, the Confrontation with Indonesia was at the forefront of Menzies' mind, but it was the Vietnam War that would come to dominate the minds and lives of Australians.

Seeking to build up an army capable of meeting the competing operational demands, the government decided to conduct a ballot to select the required number of men to be conscripted. This was the 'birthday ballot'. To its opponents it would be the 'blood ballot'. Wooden marbles, each numbered with a day of the year, would be drawn from a lottery barrel. The 20-year-old men whose birthday corresponded with a drawn number would be balloted in and have to present themselves for assessment and possible service. Men whose number was not drawn could still volunteer to complete national service.

Almost every young man who was turning 20 and living in Australia, whether or not they were citizens, was liable for national service if called up. However, just as the previous NSTS had exempted some groups, so too did the NSS. This again included young men who were identified as Indigenous Australians, although they still could voluntarily enlist in the armed forces.

A system to deal with deferrals and conscientious objectors was introduced. There was also an alternative to full-time service in the Regular Army. On registration or before an individual's ballot was drawn, men could choose to join the Citizen Military Force to meet their national service obligation by serving part-time for a period of six years.

*Sappers Claude Malone  
and Paul Taylor of 1st  
Field Squadron, Royal  
Australian Engineers,  
prod for mines,  
Phuoc Tuy Province,  
August 1971. (AWM  
P/E 71/0413/VN)*





*Helicopter evacuating wounded at Fire Support Base Balmoral. Trooper Mick Jackson (running) and L/Cpl Rus Kiellerup (standing) from C Squadron, 1 Armoured Regiment. May 1968. (AWM CRO/68/0563/VN)*

While serving in the CMF, national servicemen were given a deferral from full-time service. At the end of their six years, their obligation for national service would be deemed met and they would be exempt from call-up.

After the highly publicised drawing of the first birthday ballot, the drawing of numbers was held in secret. The government was concerned about men trying to avoid 'call-up'. However, most men who were called up did present themselves for military service, particularly when the scheme was first introduced. Far from the modern image of near universal anti-war sentiment, most Australians initially supported national service. However, in April 1965, Menzies announced that national servicemen would be liable to be sent overseas to Vietnam. This drew widespread criticism. It was a drastic change to the tradition of national service for the defence of Australia. The change to the terms of national service helped fuel anti-war sentiment and would contribute to growing opposition to the Vietnam War at home. National servicemen were inevitably dragged into the bitter public debate and protests that followed.

In early 1966, the Government decided to expand the force committed to the war in Vietnam including by forming the 1st Australian Task Force. By May 1966, Nashos had begun serving in South Vietnam with the 5th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (5RAR) arriving at Nui Dat that month. It was the second infantry battalion to be deployed to South Vietnam; and the first with both regular and national servicemen. Thereafter, Nashos served in Vietnam with every army combat unit and many other units.



*Private Tony Medelis, 1RAR, Bien Hoa Province, South Vietnam. May 1968. (AWM ERR/68/0512/VN)*

Nashos could find themselves serving virtually anywhere that the Australian Regular Army had a presence. Men were posted to bases right across Australia. The vastness of the country meant they could be separated from families and friends for the two years of their national service. Others were posted to Singapore and Malaysia, including to Borneo during the Indonesian Confrontation. Still more served in Papua New Guinea, including with the Pacific Islands Regiment (PIR). This included some 300 Nashos who were trained teachers and served in Papua New Guinea as part of the Royal Australian Army Education Corps, teaching and serving with the PIR's Papuan and New Guinean soldiers.

Much like the previous NSTS, national service in the 1960s initially gained public support for its character-building nature. Service in the Army meant many things to national servicemen, but a common thread to most recollections were the bonds forged through mateship found in their unit, their platoon and above all, their section. One Nasho recalled the 'bond created by facing hardship and death' and the love it inspired between the men in his section:

*'It was as if we all threw our lives and futures into a common heap and pledged to safeguard that precious common heap. Fools and fine men were levelled by that unrecognised, unacknowledged action and ten became one for the duration.'*

Set against the camaraderie of mateship and the pride that came with national service, for those deployed to South Vietnam, service in the Vietnam War also changed the lives of many Nashos who served there. The nature of war and the extreme conditions of service in a combat area affected national servicemen in different ways. More than 200 national servicemen lost their lives in Vietnam, and many others returned bearing the physical and mental scars of war, enduring the complexities of the veteran experience. One Nasho veteran found in the passing of years 'the bad times become good times, and we can now relate some memories that are really quite funny', but that 'other deeds and other actions are placed in dark corners of our minds never to be unleashed'. Only 'when mates get together who have a common bond as a combat soldier' could these memories be more openly addressed.

There were some welcome home parades as units finished their tour and returned to Australia together, usually by sea. However, many Nashos missed out as they were returned to Australia when their term of national service was up. One Nasho recalled that it 'was easy to develop the perception that we were being brought home in secret, almost in shame'. This meant they missed out on the sense of closure that could be granted by welcome home ceremonies.



*HMAS Sydney (III) is transporting troops from Australia to Vung Tau, South Vietnam. 8 April 1968. (AWM NAVY16571)*

Irrespective of how and where they had served, Nashos found that once their national service was completed, they would be hastily discharged and their return to civilian life was often quick and impersonal. One national serviceman found that for him and many others, 'going back to civilian life was the worst part' of national service, explaining: 'Old friends and family were hard to connect with' and that after two years lost to the army 'the world had moved on without us.' Further, being out of the army, many Nashos suddenly lost contact with mates who had shared similar experiences and in many cases they were left without support. Whether they had served in Vietnam or in Australia, Singapore, Malaysia, or Papua New Guinea, Nashos returned to a society that seemed increasingly hostile to all veterans due to widespread opposition to the war in Vietnam.

National service also disrupted lives and families in other ways. When young men were called up everything had to be put on hold. Two years in the Regular Army meant that studies were deferred, careers were interrupted, friends moved on, and young love was often thwarted. The impacts of national service were not restricted to those who served. All families shouldered a burden when a son, brother, husband or partner was called up. The personal cost to Nashos and their families is a lingering reminder of the sacrifices they made.

By the end of 1971, with the withdrawal of combat forces from Vietnam, the need for national servicemen was reducing. In October of that year, the term for national service was reduced to 18 months, and then on 6 December 1972, the government of Gough Whitlam announced the end of the NSS, as the scheme had served its purpose and was no longer required. The passing of the *National Service Termination Act 1973* officially ended national service. Before the passing of the Termination Act, there was no legal mechanism to discharge national servicemen early, meaning many were compelled to accept an early discharge on 'compassionate grounds'. Others continued serving for the duration of their term, with the final Nasho completing his service in November 1974.

Between 1964 and 1972, more than 800,000 men registered for national service and 63,000 were called up. Of these, nearly 19,000 served in Vietnam. Others served in Australia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Papua New Guinea. Between 1966 and 1972, more than 200 Nashos were killed while on active service (two in Borneo, and the remainder in Vietnam) and some 1,200 more were wounded. They were not the only deaths and injuries incurred, as an unknown number of Nashos died during their national service from other causes such as training accidents, illnesses, road accidents, and suicide.

*Couple bid farewell, Wollongong Station. 1965.  
(From the collections of the Wollongong City Libraries  
and the Illawarra Historical Society)*





*Peter Geelen and Robert Costello, National Service Gunners with  
102nd Field Battery, Bien Ho Province, Vietnam. May 1968.  
(AWM ERR/68/0473/VN)*

## Legacy and Memory

The experience of national service under the NSTS and NSS was varied. Many Nashos felt that they, and their nation, benefitted from national service, and that the experience made them better men. Some found the military life agreed with them and they went on to careers in the armed forces. Others had opposite views of experience as national servicemen. All were affected by their service, both for good and for ill. And regrettably, for some men, national service had a tragic outcome.

Unfortunately, the contribution of national servicemen was not fully appreciated by the country they served. Nashos were recognised in 2001 when the government of Prime Minister John Howard introduced the Anniversary of National Service 1951-1972 Medal. In 2010, Governor-General Quentin Bryce dedicated the National Service Memorial Fountain at the Australian War Memorial.

Today, Australians honour the service and the sacrifices of the more than 280,000 national servicemen who served between 1951 and 1974. Nashos played an integral role in the defence of Australia during the most tense decades of the Cold War. Nashos and all Australians have every reason to be proud of their service.

**Thank you to all the national servicemen who  
share stories of their experiences so that we can all  
better understand what national service meant to  
the men who served and their families.**



Dedicated to all Australian Servicemen and in memory of those who died

*National service training at Puckapunyal, Victoria. David Irving, of Corowa, Frank White, of Mitcham, Neville Treenayne, of Box Hill, Ray Brownall and Fred White, both of Bendigo, an anti-tank crew during manoeuvres. (H98.105/4354. Argus newspaper collection of photographs, State Library Victoria.)*



## ORDER OF SERVICE

# ORDER OF SERVICE

The music for the service is provided by: The Band of the Royal Military College  
**Major Douglas Hall – Music Director**

**PLAYING OF THE DIDGERIDOO**

**Able Seaman Kiern Nieves**

**WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

**Master of Ceremonies**  
**Colonel Lisa Weston CSM**  
Australian Army

**FLAG PARTY IS MOUNTED**

**Members of Australia's Federation Guard**

**COMMEMORATIVE ADDRESS**

**Hon Matt Keogh MP**  
Minister for Veterans' Affairs  
Minister for Defence Personnel

**FIRST VETERAN READING**

**Albert McKay RFD**  
On behalf of veterans of the 1951-59 scheme

**MUSICAL PIECE**

**Performed by members of the**  
**Band of the Royal Military College**

**SECOND VETERAN READING**

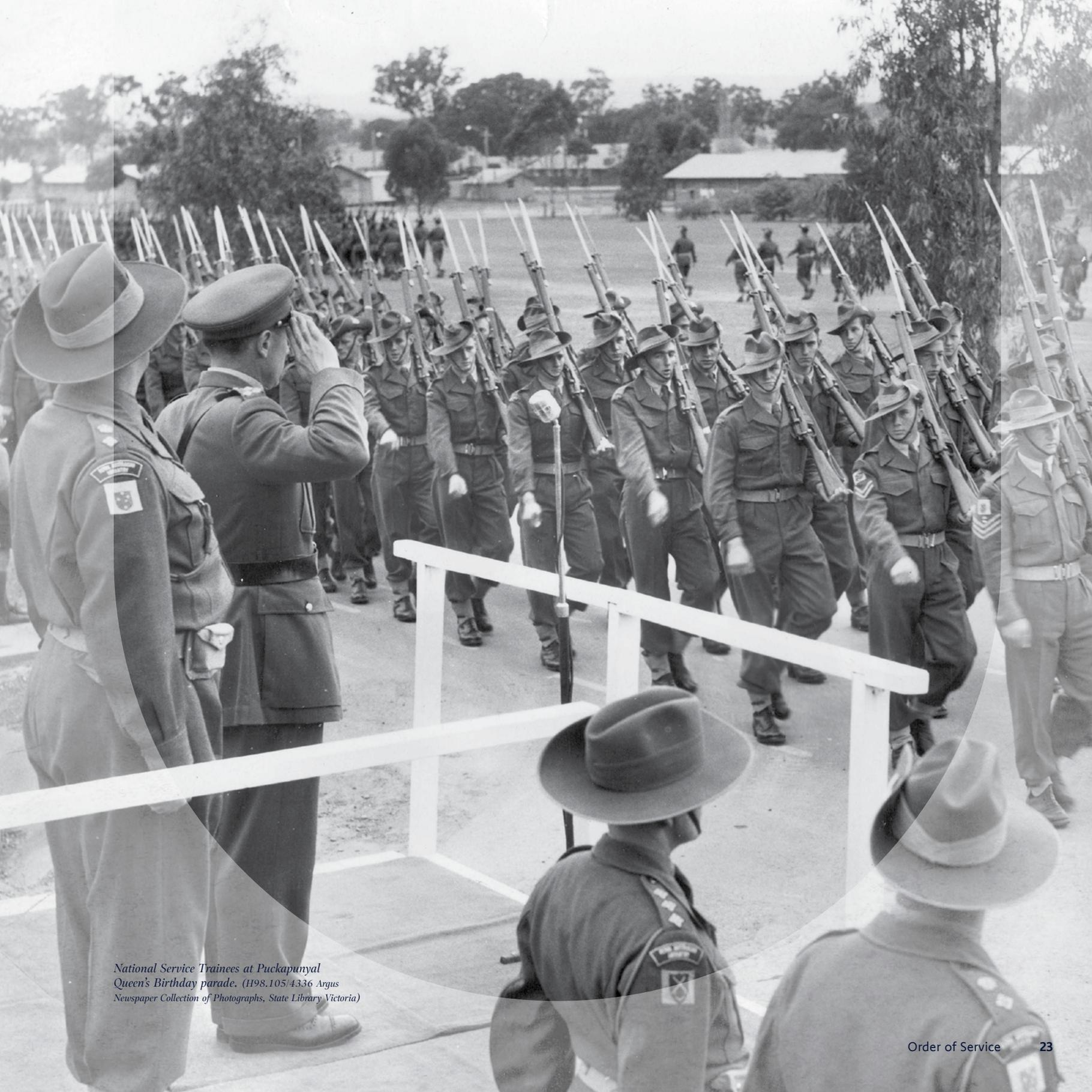
**Bob Whittaker**  
On behalf of national servicemen who served in Vietnam

**THIRD VETERAN READING**

**Ron Brandy**  
On behalf of veterans of the 1964-72 scheme

**PRAYER OF COMMEMORATION**

**Chaplain Andrew Thorburn**



*National Service Trainees at Puckapunyal  
Queen's Birthday parade. (198.105/4336 Argus  
Newspaper Collection of Photographs, State Library Victoria)*

## OFFICIAL WREATH LAYING

## ODE OF REMEMBRANCE

## LAST POST

## ONE MINUTE OF SILENCE

## ROUSE

## Official representatives to lay wreaths

### Mr Albert 'John' Olsen and Mrs Judith Olsen

National service 1951-59 scheme

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,  
We will remember them.

#### Response:

*We will remember them.*

#### All:

*Lest we forget.*

*National service training at Puckapunyal.  
Pte. Keith Fuller of the Royal Melbourne  
Regiment taking cover during a training  
exercise. (H98.105/4351. Argus newspaper  
collection of photographs, State Library Victoria)*





## **NATIONAL ANTHEM OF AUSTRALIA**

*Australians all let us rejoice,  
For we are one and free;  
We've golden soil and wealth for toil;  
Our home is girt by sea;  
Our land abounds in nature's gifts  
Of beauty rich and rare;  
In history's page, let every stage  
Advance Australia Fair.  
In joyful strains then let us sing,  
Advance Australia Fair.*

## **FINAL BLESSING**

**Chaplain Andrew Thorburn**

## **FLAG PARTY IS DISMOUNTED**

**Members of Australia's Federation Guard**

## **PUBLIC WREATH LAYING**

Members of the public are invited to lay floral tributes.  
Attendees not laying wreaths are asked to remain seated.

## **CONCLUSION OF SERVICE**

*RAAF national service trainees.  
Photographer, Ron Scolah, (1951-1955).  
(H99.206/2627. Argus Newspaper Collection of  
Photographs, State Library Victoria)*



Dedicated to all Australian National Servicemen and in memory of those who died

RAAF national service trainee David Bannerman (Hobart, Tas.) signing discharge papers while other trainees look on. Photographer, Ron Scoriah (1951-1955). (H199.206/2634. Argus newspaper Collection of Photographs, State Library Victoria)



## CUSTOMS, TRADITIONS & PROTOCOLS

# CUSTOMS, TRADITIONS AND PROTOCOLS

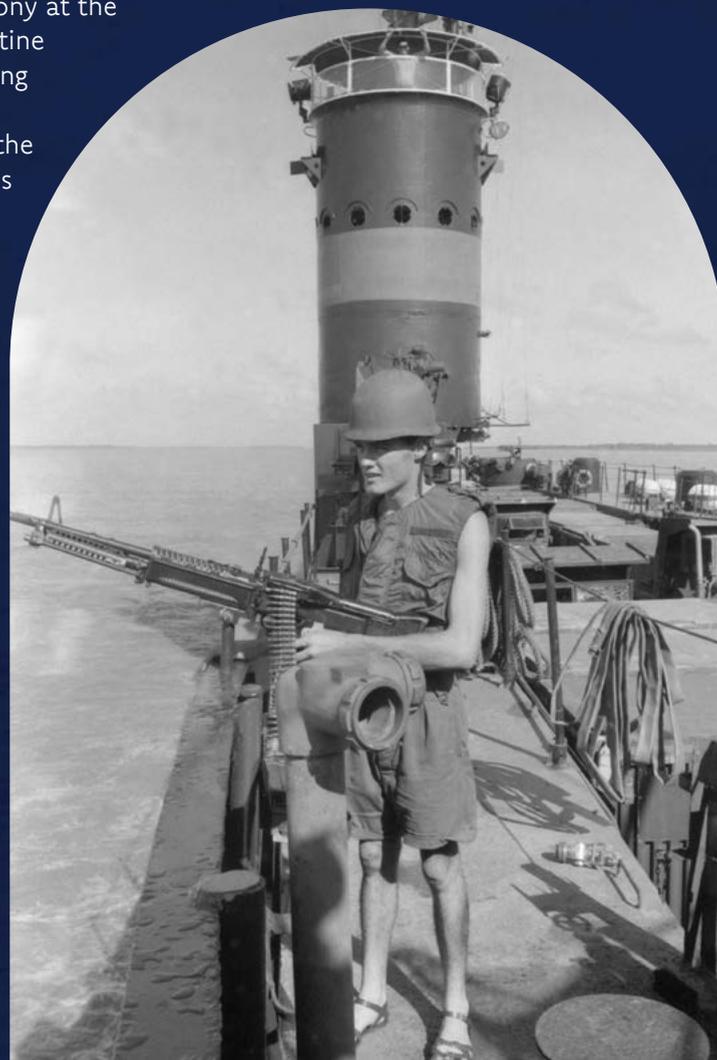
## PLAYING OF THE DIDGERIDOO

The didgeridoo (or as it is known by the Traditional Custodians of the Yolngu clans of north-east Arnhem Land, the 'yidaki'), is not traditionally played in Ngunnawal or Wiradjuri country. However, it is played here today with the permission of the Ngunnawal people to acknowledge and pay respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women who have contributed to the defence of Australia in times of peace and war.

## HISTORY OF FLAG PARTY PROTOCOLS

The history of Flag Party Protocol in the Australian Defence Force (ADF) reflects the evolution of Australia's military ceremonial traditions and the growing significance of national symbols. Before the 1950s, Australian military units followed British customs for the handling of flags and colours, which shaped early ceremonial practices. A major development occurred in 1954 with the establishment of the daily flag raising and lowering ceremony at the Guardhouse in what is now Blamey Square, Canberra. This routine became the foundation of the modern ADF Flag Party, introducing formalised drill movements, slow march pacing, and specific ceremonial dress requirements. Through the late 20th century, the unification of the ADF and increasing national commemorations strengthened the need for consistent, tri service flag protocol. In 2000, the formation of the Australia's Federation Guard further professionalised these duties, centralising ceremonial responsibilities and standardising training across the services. By the 2020s, the Flag Party had become a key feature of national events, including Anzac Day, Armistice Day, state occasions, and remembrance ceremonies at the Australian War Memorial. Today, the Flag Party remains a respected tri service representation, upholding dignity, precision, and respect for Australia's national symbols while maintaining traditions that have developed across decades of military history.'

*National serviceman  
Douglas Kippen  
manning a machine  
gun on board an  
Army Landing Ship  
off the Vietnamese  
coast, October 1969.  
(AWM COM/69/0731/VN)*



*National Service Trainees at Puckapunyal  
Queen's Birthday Parade. (H98.105/4335.  
Argus newspaper collection of photographs, State  
Library Victoria)*



## FLAG PROTOCOLS

Flags are important symbols of all nations, and of those who have fought and died for those nations, and as such should be treated with respect at all times. They should not be subjected to indignity or displayed in a position or size inferior to any other flag. They should always be flown aloft and free and should not be allowed to fall or lie upon the ground. Please note that 'flag draping' (i.e. wearing the flag as a cape or cloak), allowing the flag to touch the ground, or defacing the flag by writing on it, may be considered disrespectful acts and are discouraged at this service. When a flag is raised or lowered, or when it is carried past in a parade or review, all present should face the flag, remove headwear and refrain from talking. Service personnel in uniform are to salute.

Today, the Australian White Ensign (AWE), the Australian National Flag (ANF) and the Royal Australian Air Force Ensign (RAAFE) will be marched on by flag bearers from Australia's Federation Guard. The Australian Army has no separate ensign but has the ceremonial role of 'Protector of the ANF'. The Navy adopted the AWE in 1967. The AWE is identical in design to the ANF but with the reversal of the blue background and white Commonwealth Star and Southern Cross. The RAAFE was approved by King George VI and formally adopted in 1948. The light blue background symbolises the sky with approval for the red kangaroo in the Roundel granted in 1982.

*National service training at Puckapunyal. 15th National Service Training Battalion's mascot, Perce the galah, with members of Battalion, Neil Judge, Garth Jeffrey, Peter Wilkinson, Peter Hall and Andrew Saniga. (H98.105/4355. Argus Newspaper Collection of Photographs, State Library Victoria)*

## ODE OF REMEMBRANCE

Many ceremonies of remembrance include a recitation of the Ode. It is the fourth stanza of *For the Fallen*, a poem written by Laurence Binyon (1869–1943) in 1914. It can also include the third stanza. The Ode has been recited in ceremonies since 1919. Attendees should stand, remove headwear and refrain from talking during the reciting of the Ode.

## LAST POST

The *Last Post* is a bugle call which signals the end of the day. It became incorporated into funeral and memorial services as a final farewell and symbolises that the duty of the dead is over and they can rest in peace. Attendees should stand, remove headwear and refrain from talking during the playing of the *Last Post*. Service personnel in uniform are to salute.

## ONE MINUTE OF SILENCE

The practice of observing one minute of silence originated soon after the First World War and provides an opportunity for quiet reflection on the sacrifice of those who served and lost their lives. Attendees should stand, remove headwear and refrain from talking during the period of silence.

## ROUSE

After the one minute of silence, flags are raised from half-mast to the masthead as the *Rouse* is sounded. Traditionally the *Rouse* called soldiers' spirits to arise, ready to fight for another day. Today it is associated with the Last Post at all military funerals, and at services of dedication and remembrance. Note: The Navy *Reveille* bugle call is different to that played by Army and Air Force. Navy does not play *Rouse* and only plays *Reveille*.

## NATIONAL ANTHEM

Attendees should stand facing the flags, remove headwear and refrain from talking during the playing of the national anthem. Service personnel in uniform are to salute.







*The logo is inspired by the Anniversary of National Service 1951-1972 Medal and the Australian Defence Force emblem, representing Navy, Army and Air Force. The cog is the traditional symbol of cooperation between the Australian Defence Force and the Australian community, its ochre colour representing the soil of Australia.*



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Veterans' Affairs**