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Australia R&R

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THOSE WHO DIED & SERVED
IN THE VIETNAM WAR**

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Representations and Reinterpretations of Australia's War in Vietnam

Edited by Jeff Doyle & Jeffrey Grey

Australia Re3R

Representations and Reinterpretations
of Australia's war in Vietnam

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VIETNAM GENERATION, INC.

&

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A Technical Note about the Text of the Essays Following

One technical aspect of this volume requires a brief comment, or more of a technical note, referring to differences in the Australian habits of spelling and punctuation. Separated as is well known, by the spoken variants of common English usage, Australians and Americans share a few distinct printed differences. With minor exceptions, involving minimal editorial intrusion (mostly by way of extending, perhaps excessively, clarifications of Australian nomenclature), the editors of this volume present these essays in a linguistic fashion acceptable to Australian readers. Some practices may then strike American readers as odd or even as incorrect. The most obvious examples are of the kind which find the use of “c” in the Australian spelling of “defence”, or variant letter order as in “centre” for “center”, “theatre” for “theater”, and so on. Punctuation is the other most obvious area where American usage more happily accepts (and occasionally demands) more diacritics generally (especially commas), than some Australian usage always requires.

The option to normalise these essays to US expectation seemed to the editors both unnecessary for the relatively few cases where genuine confusion might eventuate and, more importantly, it seemed very unsound as a matter of principle. Given the volume’s intent to uncover the Australian experience as similar to, though different from, America’s Vietnam, unusual spelling and punctuation effects stand as signs, minor perhaps, of those differences.

Acknowledgements

This Special Number of Vietnam Generation is the second book length contribution to the study of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War which has its origins in a cross-disciplinary research project undertaken in the English and History Departments of the University College, University of New South Wales, Australian Defence Force Academy. The Project, titled "Representations of the Vietnam War in Australia, from 1962 to the Present", has been funded in its initial three years by grants from the Australian Research Council, to whom our first acknowledgment is made. Without the backing of the ARC, the Vietnam Project and its various results, including this volume, could not have been produced.

Nor could a cross-disciplinary task of the magnitude of the Vietnam Project work smoothly without the wide support of the University College as an institution, and that of our colleagues and friends; the editors of this volume would like to record their gratitude for such support. From its inception the Project has benefitted substantially from the aid of a number of our senior colleagues: Professor Alan Gilbert, formerly Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) of the University of New South Wales, and now Vice-Chancellor of the University of Tasmania, has always provided sure-footed scholarly guidance and research impetus; sustaining intellectual and personal guidance have been forthcoming, as ever, from both Professor Harry Heseltine, Deputy Rector and Head of the Department of English, and Professor Peter Dennis, Head of the Department of History. We owe them debts, individually and together, greater than we know; lastly to Peter Pierce, our former colleague at the University College, and now lecturer at the Australian Studies Centre, Monash University, Victoria, for his intellectual and other observations, we are always grateful. No research in the English department could function half so well without the untiring efforts of Trish Middleton (Administrative officer, English Department).

ARC funding over the first two years (1989-90) provided the Project with two admirable Research Assistants, Lucy O'Connor and Kath Dermody whose voluminous gatherings underlie much of the compilation of the bibliography. Other elements of the bibliography could not have appeared without the extremely able work of the Australian Defence Force Academy Library staff. Thanks to Lynn Hard (Librarian); we are also particularly indebted to Mary Anne Neilsen, Chris Dawkins, Sue Adams, and Glynnis Moore. Our thanks too, for some last minute assistance with archival matters, to Antoinette Merrillees.

The tasks of editing this special number have been aided by the pleasant and stimulating co-operation of our contributors. Our dealings with our senior editor, Kali Tal, have been conducted in the highest spirit of academic exchange. We are pleased to have been asked to contribute to Vietnam Generation, and to have had such an understanding editor to aid in publication.

In the final stages of editing, the vagaries of sabbaticals, conference attendance and other research-related travels, instituted a small flurry of tele-communications between the editors, often travelling on more than one continent and separated by more than two oceans. Solutions to travelling editorial problems were the more happily resolved by beyond-the-call succour given by various persons and institutions. The editors therefore wish to record their gratitude to: Dr Robert and Beate Doyle, University of Pennsylvania State; Dr Nan Albinski, University of Pennsylvania State; Professor Henry Albinski, and the staff of the Australia and New Zealand Studies Center, University of Pennsylvania State; Professor G.A. Bentley, University College, University of Toronto and Dr Beth Bentley; Heather May, Farnham, Surrey, England; Edmund and Jane May, Newmills, Black Isle, Scotland; D.L. Jenkin, Charnwood, Canberra; Dr Susan Ballyn, University of Barcelona; and lastly, for their extraordinary collegiality, and the use, in desperation, of the Macintosh IICI, Jilly McLaren, Mike Sleight, and the staff of West Surrey College of Arts and Design, Farnham, Surrey, England.

Jeff Doyle and Jeffrey Grey,
University College, Canberra, 1991.

Australia R&R: Introductory Comments

Jeff Doyle and Jeffrey Grey

“Australia R&R”—the title of this introductory essay should, for many in the United States, evoke recollections of pleasant times spent away from the war zone, times of rest and recuperation at one of several ports-of-call in the Asia Pacific region. Known to some servicemen, one of those ports-of-call may well have been Australia, chiefly in one or other of her major eastern cities—Sydney, Melbourne or Brisbane—where, by all accounts, the R&R in whatever form it was taken was very fine indeed. “R&R”, whatever its strict definition—rest and recreation, rest and recuperation, recovery and recreation, or some other combination—is useful then as a title to a volume devoted to introducing the Australian experience of Vietnam to a wider American audience—the term is at once familiar as R&R and unfamiliar to most when it is re-located to Australia; as metaphor for the method of this volume it is doubly valuable since it suggests, severally, notions of recovery, recuperation, and revaluation which the analysis of Vietnam in the US, and now more recently Australia, has been undergoing for some time.

For that reason R&R is immediately useful for those American readers—“in country” veterans and others—who know something of Australia’s involvement in Vietnam; this volume will provide various kinds of recuperation of their memories of that involvement. For other American readers, who know less of allied participants in Vietnam, this volume it is hoped will provide an introduction—a means of recovering some of the representations of Australia’s roles as ally. For all readers, the volume is offered as a means of reinterpreting, and hence revaluing, the roles Australia played during and after the Vietnam War. From the perspective offered by 20-30 years distance, it is not the primary intent of these essays to make inferences about the way America revalues its roles, nor that of its allies, but to some extent the nature of the major power-minor power alliances played out in Vietnam and subsequently make some implications, if not stronger inferences, inevitable. Perhaps part of the “recovery” Australia, or at least numbers of Australians, need(s) to make from the Vietnam War is a stronger revaluing of the way they write, think and function in regard to the American alliance. This applies in all fields, social and intellectual, and not just in the more obvious military and political spheres. If Vietnam as event and/or cultural subject is the 1960s’ watershed (or even *the*

product of the crises of 1960s culture) it is often held to be, then Australia's part in the event of Vietnam may well come to have far more significance than its many commentators have recognised so far.

Useful too in the metaphoric halo of R&R is the sense conferred of a relocation of American experiences of Vietnam to another place—another location. To Americans in Vietnam it was “Nam”, “in-country”, and most tellingly “Indian country” (with all its interlayering of Puritan mythology)—all strange locales but, as it has been argued in many American critical accounts, all ultimately accommodated to an American vision of the nation's place within the world pattern of events. To most Australians Vietnam has yet to find such a happily resolved mythic location as “Indian country” allows; For Australia even within the face of conflating and comforting drives, Vietnam remains inertia-ridden as, and seems set to remain at least for the foreseeable future, a very different place—the “funny place” (often expressed in other and less polite terms)—a topography of the unfixed or a dis-location.

The essays in this volume offer then for the specialist and general reader alike, some Australian R&R—some recoveries, recuperations, revaluing and reinterpretations, and finally, an uncertain relocation of the Vietnam War. The essays present versions of the history of the Vietnam War as experienced by one of its principal allies: “versions of history” since one of the problems also inherent in recovery and recreation is the effect that time has on the memory of the past as it “actually happened”—those so-called events of history; “versions of history” too, since the writing of any kind of history, social, literary or military is no longer a simple matter (if it ever was) of collecting and reporting the concrete “actual” events, documents and figures; “versions of history” since Vietnam as American history is hardly a straightforward topic, as Australian history the complexity is increased with the necessity of writing and rewriting in the face of the massive US output of Vietnam as history, as film, as novel, and as myth.

And given that massive output, this introductory commentary takes, what may be the unusual step, as its starting point the volume's last two entries—the Chronology which speaks for itself attempting to locate Australian involvement in the wider context of the Asia Pacific region, and the Select Bibliography. Apart from its obvious function as a resource for future studies, on the one hand, a reading of the bibliography in conjunction with the preceding essays provides some insight into the range and depth (or lack) of study Vietnam has received at Australian hands. For example, for Australia, neither the MIA nor the racial issues have any significant impact, as they did and continue to do in the American revaluations of the war. It is hardly surprising that there are virtually no studies concerned with such matters. A number of other areas of major concern to Americans may similarly be revealed unexpectedly in absentia from Australian concerns. Part of this volume aims to “explain” those gaps; not so much fill them in, for they mark some

of the differences between the two country's experiences of Vietnam. On the other hand, even a brief reading of the bibliography will reveal areas where considerable discussion of the war was and is an active concern, sometimes in areas less central to the United States. Australia's continuing concern with its role, status and future alliances within the immediate southeast Asian region is one such area, and this explains why to Australian sensibilities the Vietnam War is intimately linked with the politics and history of the whole region—a region somewhat larger than American focus sometimes appears to understand. This regional emphasis is brought out in a number of the essays following, and it explains in part the breadth of reference to books and articles which to American eyes may not be at once directly relevant to the Vietnam War.

Moreover the Select Bibliography reveals in more than a quantitative way the presences and lacunae of Australian studies: first, it may be a surprise to some, especially those in some areas of the scholarly community, to see references to quite so many professional magazines, journals and to the kind of specialist publication devoted to technical data of a military kind, in a bibliography primarily biased to academic—that is literary and historical—studies. In part these special references are explained by the editorial desire to be as comprehensive as possible, and thereby to allow the widest possible access to a general readership. In part it is linked methodologically to the kinds of study which as yet remain mostly unwritten. It is more than anecdotally significant to note that the bibliography is larger than the editors expected it to be when its compilation was first begun. Vietnam had long been an area of scant attention; and moreover, the editors believed that even with the blooming of Australian writing on Vietnam, mostly in the 1980s, the quantitative product could not hope to match, even proportionately, the extent of the US output. There has been an explosion of literature devoted to Vietnam in the 1980s, but the bibliography's size is due also to the inclusion of those specialist publications. They require further comment.

Academic writing has habitually sectioned off certain areas as unworthy of more than scant perusal. Some technical and professional writings, while acknowledged in some military histories, have received little attention by other kinds of scholarly practice—notably in the social or literary-cultural histories. Many have noted how the helicopter dominates the iconography of Vietnam, even it must be said of the Australian imagery, where the helicopter played a slightly less central role; but while studies based in the humanities regularly note this, they have yet to investigate the material connections between the helicopter's tactical role and its representations—put simply, between the way the battlefield was changed by the machinery available, and the way this comes to materially effect the writing of the battlefield. More inferences such as these may be forthcoming; and, Australian rewriting of Vietnam offers a good area for such discussion because of the profound material,

indeed matériel, differences between Australian and American expectations of, and practices within, the theatres of the Vietnam War. Noting this is not to suggest that the following essays have on the whole achieved this nexus between technical matériel and a “material culture” reading, though both Terry Burstall’s and Jan Bassett’s essays lean in that direction. Rather the compilation of the bibliography and, it is suggested, its reading as an account of Australia’s Vietnam, highlights those areas which promise much for future rewriting.

The second way in which the Select Bibliography functions is to provide a context for the essays. While each essay in this volume is self contained, each essay also derives some of its meaning from the cumulative effect of the sequence and also from the effect of being read within and to some extent against the context provided by the bibliography. These essays present introductions to general readers, and at the same time re-write and re-value Australia’s Vietnam, as it stands so far, summarised in the bibliography and chronology which, perhaps contrarily, conclude the volume.

From another viewpoint, to begin appropriately for a re-valuing the volume begins with the official historian of the Vietnam War Peter Edwards’ “The Australian Government and Involvement in the Vietnam War”. a judicious gleaning of the major political and military events, discusses the parallels and differences of the pathways leading the Australians and the Americans to war in Vietnam. Shifting his focus from the world scale events of the war, to their social and political reflections within Australia, Edwards explicates: the Australian shift from United Kingdom to US alliance; the evolution of the concerns with Indonesia and Asian communism within Australian society; and the effects these events and concerns had on shaping the large and small scale political allegiances within Australia and the wider region. His essay clarifies the links between the large scale political manoeuvring within the southeast Asian-Pacific region with the specific national concerns of a small population uncertain of its role and future in that wider context.

Jeffrey Grey’s “Vietnam as History: the Australian Case” traverses much the same terrain adding extra documentation and variant readings to many of the same events and political couplings. A significant difference lies in Grey’s focus on the handling of the events as translation, that is, as they are written as history. At its most straightforward Grey’s essay provides a telling series of critiques of the several key texts of historical, political and social analysis of Australia’s Vietnam—that is, in part he critically reads substantial sections of the Select Bibliography. On the one hand, his essay provides entry to those texts suggesting as he assesses their strengths and weaknesses (Grey is forthright in apportioning the latter), their originating contexts, ideologies and methods. On the other hand, and more pertinently for this volume, Grey assesses the wider context of the writing of history, particularly military history,

in Australia. In doing this he places the events of Vietnam into a broader nexus of events, representations and ideologies which constitute a major aspect of Australian national identity—the network of military myth and cultural accretion known as the Anzac legend. Importantly Grey points to the way in which the Australian national identity has been, and it seems continues to be, partially moulded by the way the country accepts or rejects its military history. This he argues is dependent on the way its historians, specialist and popular alike, choose to write that history. By comparison with the pattern of writing about Vietnam in the United States, where Grey contends that the “historiographical battle lines . . . match those drawn politically during the war”, the Australian historiography is both more complex and less well advanced in practice. More complex, since there are more groups competing for the rights of controlling the publicly accepted representations of the war, and less well advanced in the depth of analysis obtained from that writing, as his critiques display. This lack of depth he sees as due less to the restricted access to data (a reference to the 30 year closure of official documents operating in Australia, which prevents all but selected personnel access to the governmental and institutional archives), than to the fundamental failure of much Australian historical writing to interrogate its own ideological biases.

As a first move in the kind of rewriting of Vietnam which Grey calls for, Terry Burstall’s “Policy Contradictions of the Australian Task Force, Vietnam, 1966” marks a strong re-assessment of the practices, at the material level, of the Australian Forces in 1966 in operations with its US allies in Phuoc Tuy province. His essay is a salutary reevaluation of the Anzac myth of the Australian as the “natural fighting man”, as he juxtaposes the pattern of Australian operational decisions against the expectations, disappointments and frustrations of the US commander, General Westmoreland. This assessment will be the more shocking to Australian sensibilities since not only does it weaken the image of Australian prowess, but it flies in the face of the popular image of American military incompetence in Vietnam, commonly held and voiced by Australian troops—who saw themselves as the professional and combat superiors of the indisciplined and careless American troops. Burstall adds more since he argues that the combat weakness of the Australians (to be sure a quantitative weakness, not a qualitative one) was structural, deriving from failures as much of military as political inexperience.

Where Burstall’s essay looks at the way that the revision of Anzac will reflect the material conditions of the field, Jane Ross’ “Veterans in Australia: the Search for Integration”, continues her substantial analyses of the reception of the returned servicemen. In a wide ranging and densely documented essay Ross details the competing images of the veteran (noted briefly in Grey’s essay as one of the problem areas), forwarded variously by the Vietnam Veterans’ Association of Australia,

the Returned Service's League, and several government departments, chiefly the repatriation system. Nor she notes has this struggle been confined to the relatively narrow concerns of the veteran communities and their "service" associations and agencies. Focussing on the popular media and the government systems, Ross demonstrates the way each in its way has from time to time deployed one or other image of the veteran as the "exclusive" image to achieve their political ends. She contends that the media in particular have treated the war and its veterans with "glib and often inaccurate analysis" using images based on the "sick" veteran borrowed unthinkingly from the US media, when other information contended that this applied only to a minority, albeit a politically vocal minority of veterans. Her essay delves into the political and moral implications of such competition, closing with a series of strongly worded questions about the cultural impact of these implications.

"Who Cares for the Caregiver?" by Jan Bassett advances another area all too often neglected in Australian writing on Vietnam, the participation of women, in this case nurses of the Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps (RAANC). Bassett's essay is based on the results of a questionnaire surveying a large proportion of the nurses on active duty in Vietnam. Not the least interest in this analysis is the way that the nurses themselves have felt the neglect of their participation; it is clear that for some their responses to the questionnaire provided an outlet for previously withheld emotions; for others it was a means of making trenchant criticisms of both the necessarily expeditious treatment they were able to give to their patients (and, often implicitly, the nurses lament the attenuation of the treatment effected by early evacuation of the patient to Australia), and the, at times, traumatic effect the pattern of instant and short-cut treatment had upon the caregiver herself.

Care for victims in Bassett's essay is widened to include those too easily taken for granted in war. Together with Ross' case of the struggle for the veteran image, the two essays suggest some significant gaps within the study of Australia's Vietnam experiences—immediately obvious as victims are the wives and families of the veterans, be they combatants or caregivers. This has been the issue motivating some aspects of the veterans' community groups, and the government studies of the effects of Agent Orange are focussed on familial effects, particularly on offspring, and not exclusively upon the soldier. There are a number of filmic and fictional accounts, and it is certain that care for the families is built into the repatriation system and the practices of the veterans associations themselves, but there are not yet enough substantial studies of the effects of the psychological traumas of Vietnam upon the immediate relatives of Australian soldiers and nurses.

Other victims and apparent victims of Vietnam are the subject of James E. Coughlan's "International Factors Influencing Australian Governments' Responses To The Indochinese Refugee Problem", which charts, in a similar fashion to Edwards' essay, the political as well as

humanitarian evolution of the refugee problem and how Australia's response continues to reflect its sense of its role and future in the southeast Asian-Pacific region. As in Edwards' chronicle of the events leading up to and through Vietnam, Coughlan details the anticipations and reactions of the various Australian political parties as the world political spectrum engages with Indochinese refugees. His analysis of the policy formation of successive Australian governments explains the political intentions of Australia's desires to cement alliances within the larger national and multi-national groupings. At the same time he shows how Australia attempted to maintain in its immigrant populations, which included the refugees, an ethnic mix acceptable to the wider Australian electorate—an electorate at times more or less sympathetic to its newest, and sometimes it was felt forcibly introduced, citizens. The refugee problem, as well as the contentions surrounding the status of the veteran, are related in Australia to the level of economic tolerance the nation can "afford" to extend to such claimants upon its welfare system. And in the case of the refugees this climate is confused by the nation's desires to preserve if not enhance their standing within the southeast Asian-Pacific community. These desires are complicated by the need to fend off the longstanding damage to the national image of a racist Australia, remaining from its once touted White Australia Policy. As such the democratic self-presentation of the Anzac as the "natural fighting man" and egalitarian advocate of the "fair go" for all, Australians and would-be Australians alike, has been and is likely in the future to be sorely tested by the racist undertones of Australian national reactions to both former allies and enemies alike.

The last two essays in this volume turn from more directly "historic" events to their representations in the literary and some of the electronic media. Where the historical and political writing has focussed indirectly on the way Vietnam has highlighted the precarious or marginal "place" of Australia, Peter Pierce's "The Funny Place": Australian Literature and the War in Vietnam" engages with the dislocation of the national identity evident in the literary experience of Vietnam. The Australian soldier's term for Vietnam, "the funny place", becomes a revived metaphor for an Australian sense of the uncertainty of self and nation, characteristic of much Australian writing, as well as that of the soldier-writers' narratives of Vietnam. Considering aspects of the soldier as the "occidental tourist" of Asia, Pierce details the curious variations and surrogacies of the Australian literature of Vietnam and juxtaposes them with both the well known US fictions of the war and with earlier Australian narratives of warfare. Placement alongside the American fiction displays the difference in handling between Vietnam as "Indian country" and Vietnam as "funny place". For Australians the "funny place" eventually became the no-place, as the soldier failed to relocate his experience within the specific myths of Anzac. As Pierce writes there was no "clear cut ideological victory", nor a clear cut enemy to complement

either the national sense of military prowess (either the Vietcong were too good or not present as enemies), or at its most extreme the race-hatred characteristic of earlier anti-Asian feeling. The latter gives way to a vague but often strident anti-Americanism, vague because the target is so unfocussed, yet strident because it picks up threads of generalised anti-imperialist and post-colonialist feelings which had also been substantial underpinnings of the Anzac tradition. Much of the Australian literature of the Vietnam war is infused with a general spirit that the soldiers were fighting on the wrong side. Unfocussed too, since the feelings of contradiction are enhanced by a rampant distrust of the Asian "other".

Relocation takes also the form of writing not about the Vietnam War but the great occasions of Anzac legend. Pierce concentrates lastly on the evasion-relocation evident in the literature of the 1970s and 1980s which consciously or otherwise seemed to have re-written the foundation events of the Anzac legend in the First World War as if they were pre-visions of Vietnam. Far from providing a sturdy moral foundation from which the nation might progress, Australian Vietnam literature accommodates a parade of abiding national anxieties, enhancing the uncertainty entailed in the Vietnam war, not recuperating from it.

Television and cinema in Australia have developed relatively few "texts" in comparison with the massive output of the US media. There are a few distinctive Australian products however, providing islands within the ocean of American material which otherwise regularly gets broadcast on the Australian airwaves. Jeff Doyle's "Dismembering the Digger: Australian Popular Culture and the Vietnam War" assess three major examples, two from the television miniseries genre, *Vietnam* (1987) and *Sword of Honour* (1987), and one feature film, Tom Jeffrey's *The Odd Angry Shot* (1979). Accepting the notion that the products of popular culture, particularly television miniseries, tend on the whole to make comfortable, to ameliorate the events of history and the vagaries and inconsistencies of character by presenting the most average and acceptable (the most ideologically neutral) images or representations, Doyle argues that each of these three texts rehearse Australia's inability to find a satisfactory resolution to its response to the Vietnam War. In spite of their careful plotting, setting and handling of narrative closure, a measure of each text's desire to make their images conform, and hence comfortable, to a resolution, each of the texts dismembers or dislocates the events of Vietnam away from that resolution, into a televised version of Pierce's "funny place". Together these last two essays proffer a wide-angled re-assessment of the preceding essays' focus on their "versions of history"—on Vietnam as a series of events, with a series of competing explanations. In denying the possibility of any neat closure, the last two essays relocate the whole volume as a necessary reminder of the difficulties inherent in evaluating the effect of Vietnam within Australian culture.

Until recently, almost specifically the time of the Australian Welcome March in October 1987, Vietnam had been nearly forgotten in the widest popular areas of Australian society. The exigencies of the nation, as in many other western nations at the time, lay mostly in the problems of national economic management, operating on the margins of a volatile world economic system, intimately allied to the swings and sweeps of the balances of military power. In its place on what the west would take as the far rim of the Asia-Pacific region, Australia continued along a path of supporting those powers whose views most nearly reflected its own desired consensus of economic, political and cultural outlooks. Crudely put, in the period since the Second World War, allegiances switched from Eurocentric, and specifically British orientation, to an American dominated though significantly Asian-Pacific orientation. Such shifts—often rapid, sometimes expedient, sometimes principled—tested many of the established traditions of a fundamentally post-colonial but still European-leaning nation. Hardly in isolation, but almost certainly as one of the major events since Second World War, the Vietnam War marks the watershed of change, both chosen and enforced, within Australian society; it is arguably, and despite the earlier evasion of its effects, a watershed of change that impacts in a manner more profound and far reaching upon Australian society than the changes which the war has wrought in the United States. This small volume is in its way one aspect of that impact, traversing most of the terrain, and remaining as yet unresolved.

The Australian Government and Involvement in the Vietnam War

Peter Edwards

When I say to an American that I am working on a major history of Australia's involvement in the post-1945 southeast Asian conflicts, culminating in the Vietnam war, I usually meet one of two reactions. The first is obvious surprise that Australia was involved in Vietnam. When Americans refer to Vietnam, they generally mean "the United States in Vietnam". American histories of the war, whether intended for a popular or a scholarly readership, usually have little to say about the involvement of allies. The proverbial visitor from outer space could read books totalling hundreds, even thousands, of pages on how the United States became involved and, with only the briefest lapses in concentration, not become aware that American allies were present at all. The second reaction is usually encountered from Americans who themselves served in Vietnam. They often have no difficulty in recalling that Australians were present in Vietnam, a recollection generally accompanied by a smile and something similar to the words: "Boy, could those guys put away beer!"

The ability of Americans to recall whether Australians fought with them in Vietnam is more important than it may seem. One of the fundamental motives for Australian involvement was to produce a sense of gratitude on the part of Americans, both in official circles and in the general public. It was, to use a phrase much used at the time, an insurance policy, a premium paid in Vietnam towards an assurance of support for Australia against problems which already existed or which might arise in the future, possibly even closer to Australia's shores. But it was more than just an insurance policy. Australia had its own concerns about communism in southeast Asia, concerns that ran parallel to those of the United States. Policy-makers in Australia's capital, Canberra, supported the domino theory as vigorously as their counterparts in Washington. Indeed, the concern was probably even greater because in its more extreme versions (including President Dwight D. Eisenhower's celebrated statement of April 1954) Australia itself was seen as one of the last dominoes in the sequence that began in Indochina.

At the same time, a small to middle power located on the fringes of southeast Asia inevitably had different priorities from those of a superpower an ocean away from Indochina. There were therefore both similarities and differences between the paths taken by the United States and Australia towards involvement in Vietnam. This paper is

intended to give an overview, for an American readership, of some of those parallels and differences.¹

To set out the major steps in the development of Australian policy will indicate many of the parallels. Australia recognized the state of Vietnam, established with French sponsorship under the former emperor Bao Dai, on 8 February 1950, the day after the United Kingdom and the United States had done so. Australian officials were well aware of the fragility of the State of Vietnam, and of the strong popular support for the rival Democratic Republic of Vietnam under Ho Chi Minh; but in the interests of the worldwide struggle against communism, the Australian Government felt it had no choice but to support the Bao Dai gamble. In 1953 it invited Jean Letourneau, the French minister in charge of relations with the Associated States (as Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia were then known), to visit Australia. Letourneau was offered arms and equipment for the French war in Indochina. The matériel that was eventually sent in 1953 and 1954 largely comprised obsolescent equipment, and was in any case a token gesture by comparison with the enormous economic and military assistance being given by the United States. Nevertheless, Australia was clearly signalling that it regarded the war in Indochina, not as merely a colonial rearguard action by France, but as a struggle between communism and democracy (or, at least, potential democracy).

In 1954 Australia had only observer status at the Geneva Conference, where its main diplomacy was sorely tested by the attempt simultaneously to maintain close and cordial relations with both the United Kingdom and the United States. Immediately after the Geneva accords, Canberra shared the widespread pessimism over the future of the non-communist regimes in Indochina, and unhesitatingly became a founder member of the South East Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) at Manila. In the late 1950s, Australia shared the growing optimism over Ngo Dinh Diem's apparent success in sustaining the Republic of Vietnam (RVN). In 1957, soon after visiting the United States to be hailed as a "miracle man" by Eisenhower, Diem became the first foreign head of state to visit Australia, where his welcome was almost equally enthusiastic.

As the communist-led insurgency grew in the early 1960s, Australian military involvement ran parallel to that of the United States, albeit on a far smaller scale. A team of advisers, initially comprising 30 officers and non-commissioned officers, was committed in 1962, growing to 83 in 1964 and 100 in 1965. In April 1965 the first battalion of infantry was committed to Vietnam. In 1966 the commitment was increased to a two-battalion Task Force, and in 1967 the Task Force was further augmented by a third battalion. Units of the Royal Australian Navy and the Royal Australian Air Force were also committed. At the height of the war Australia had about 8000 service personnel in Vietnam at any one time. In 1971 the withdrawal of the Task Force began and by the end of

1972 virtually all Australian military personnel had been withdrawn, apart from an embassy guard. In all, about 50,000 service personnel served in Vietnam and 500 lost their lives.²

All of this will sound familiar, suggesting perhaps a microcosmic imitation of the American commitment. But there were significant differences between Australia's and America's paths to Vietnam. The first concerns the role of the Australian-American relationship itself, a topic obviously of much greater concern to Canberra than to Washington. While Australian policy-makers shared much of the American perception of a threat of communist expansionism in southeast Asia, they were as conscious of Australia's weakness as the United States was of its military might. If critics of American policy referred to "the arrogance of power", critics of Australian attitudes referred to the "frightened country", the nation that had an almost pathological fear of being "the last domino".³ Curiously, given the longstanding fears in the Australian community of threats from the north, much of the weakness was self-induced. In the early 1950s, during the Korean War, serious efforts were made to improve Australia's defence capacity but thereafter, for the remainder of the decade, defence expenditure was kept artificially low. The Government argued that its most useful contribution to the struggle against communism was to develop the country's economic base; investment was therefore directed towards "national development" rather than to defence.

This kind of thinking lay behind the frequent references by Robert Gordon (from 1963 Sir Robert) Menzies, Prime Minister from 1949 to 1966, to the importance of Australia's "great and powerful friends", by which he meant principally the United States and the United Kingdom. The Menzies Government took the view that Australia, with its vast territory and small population, could not defend itself, but relied on its alliances, principally SEATO, ANZUS (the Australian-New Zealand-United States security treaty signed in 1951) and to a lesser extent ANZAM (an Australian-New Zealand-United Kingdom defence arrangement for the Malayan area). This reliance on allies, however, led to another fear, that the great and powerful friends might withdraw from the region, leaving Australia isolated and defenceless as the dominoes fell. The United States and the United Kingdom could never leave the north Atlantic, but they could leave southeast Asia. SEATO was therefore seen from the outset as a less reliable shield than NATO. From the negotiation of the Manila treaty, Australians expressed concern over whether SEATO had sufficient "teeth", by which they meant principally whether it was a sufficiently strong guarantee of United States military support in times of need.

Much of Australia's effort in defence and foreign policy was aimed therefore at trying to ensure that the United States would retain its presence in southeast Asia. These efforts were further encouraged in the late 1950s and early 1960s by signs that the United Kingdom was likely

to withdraw its forces from east of Suez, in order to concentrate on developing its relations with the European continent. At the same time, both the United Kingdom and France were becoming increasingly reluctant to support western military intervention in Indochina, making SEATO look even more "toothless". Strange as it may now seem, the underlying concern of the Australian Government in the early 1960s was that the new Democratic administration of John F. Kennedy might not share the determination of its Republican predecessor to resist communist expansionism in southeast Asia. Despite the obvious signs that Kennedy and his successor, Lyndon B. Johnson, were steadily raising the stakes in Vietnam, this fear persisted.

The congressional resolution secured by Johnson after the Gulf of Tonkin incident in August 1964 was welcomed by Menzies in the Australian federal government's lower house, the House of Representatives, with an almost tangible sense of relief, as a sign that the United States was irrevocably committed to maintaining the security of southeast Asia.⁴ Even so, traces of the fear of American withdrawal persisted. In the diplomatic exchanges of late 1964 and early 1965 the Australian Government offered a battalion of combat troops when the United States had not even asked specifically for assistance in that form. It was as much an encouragement to the United States to stay the course as it was a response to years of pressure from Washington to show that Vietnam was a cause for the whole "free world", not just for the United States.

Indeed, one Australian historian has argued that Johnson might not have made the major American troop commitments in 1965 had he not received such strong and consistent encouragement from Australia.⁵ This seems rather unlikely. In all the thousands of words that have been written on United States intervention in Vietnam, based on incalculable amounts of research on official and private records, no-one has seriously suggested that Australia had such a crucial influence on United States policy. That is not to deny that Johnson undoubtedly welcomed the strong support he received from Australia, when so much of the rest of the world was turning against him. There was clearly a genuine personal as well as political rapport between Johnson and Menzies' successor, Harold Holt, which was made manifest in 1966 when Johnson became the first incumbent United States president to visit Australia. The visit became a triumphal procession, paving the way for Holt's huge election victory later in the year. When Holt drowned, in an apparent accident, at the end of 1967, Johnson again visited Australia, this time to attend the funeral. His personal attendance was a notable mark of respect and friendship, but there is little evidence to suggest that Australia had any significant effect on the course of American policy, other than to confirm Johnson on a course he had already chosen.

While much has been written about the cordiality of Australian-American relations in the Vietnam period, and about the degree to which either party was pushed or pulled into commitment by the other, another

aspect has been less noticed. While Australia had been afraid that the United States might withdraw from the region, it also had a recurring fear that Washington had not always thought through the implications of its policies, running the risk of precipitating a wider war. During the Indochina crisis of 1954, Australia was clearly concerned by the possibility that the "united action" which Secretary of State John Foster Dulles was encouraging might lead to a larger war, possibly including China, and also possibly leading to the use of nuclear weapons. Similarly, during the Laos crisis of 1961, Australian ministers feared that western intervention might provoke a massive response from North Vietnam and China, in turn leading to pressure by the western military commanders for the use of nuclear weapons. This fear was a recurring theme in Australian consideration of policy towards southeast Asia in the late 1950s and early 1960s, although it was generally suppressed beneath the greater fear of the spread of communism.

But the Australian fear of the expansion of communism through southeast Asia was not confined to the possible fall of the "dominoes" on the mainland, running from Vietnam through Laos, Cambodia, Burma, and Thailand to Malaya. Australians were usually at least as concerned with Indonesia as with Indochina. This highly populated country, geographically so close to Australia, was not seen as simply another domino. Australian policy-makers always recognized that the struggle between communists and anti-communists in Indonesia was largely separate from that on the mainland, and of much greater importance to Australia. Developments there took on added urgency in the late 1950s, as President Sukarno raised the pressure in his campaign to incorporate western New Guinea, which had remained in Dutch hands after the rest of the Netherlands East Indies had gained independence as the Republic of Indonesia. Success in this campaign would mean that Australia in a sense shared a land border with Indonesia, because Australia administered the eastern half of the island of New Guinea under a United Nations mandate. If the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) subsequently came to power, Australia could thus find itself cheek-by-jowl with a populous country under communist control, without the comfortable insulation of the miles of land and sea between mainland Australia and mainland southeast Asia.

The major difficulty for Australia was that, on this issue, Canberra and Washington did not see eye-to-eye. The United States did not support Dutch and Australian opposition to the Indonesian claim to western New Guinea. On the contrary, it saw acquiescence in this expansion as the best way to keep Indonesia in the non-communist camp. Particularly after the end of 1961, the United States facilitated the transfer of power in western New Guinea, nominally under the aegis of the United Nations, from the Dutch to the Indonesians. Australia could do nothing but accept the inevitable with as much grace as possible.

These events underlined the extent to which Australia, by restricting its defence expenditure in favour of economic development, had made itself dependent on the goodwill of the United States. Consequently in the early 1960s the Australian Government took every step it could to try to win that goodwill. It informed Washington that it would do everything possible to meet any American requests for base facilities on Australian soil. Several such agreements were reached, providing for co-operation between defence and civilian agencies in communications, space research and meteorology. The most important was the approval in 1962 for a Very Low Frequency (VLF) naval communications station at North-West Cape in Western Australia, to facilitate communications to United States submarines operating in the Indian Ocean. The Australian Government took a very compliant attitude to this request, determined to allow no obstacle to the creation of a facility which would further commit the United States to the defence of Australia and its region.

It was in this context that Australia considered American requests in the early 1960s for advisers and other forms of civilian and military assistance in South Vietnam. At the same time, it was receiving similar requests for support for the new nation of Malaysia, formed in 1963 by joining Malaya, Singapore and former British territories on the island of Borneo. The Indonesians had declared a policy of "Confrontation" towards Malaysia, involving diplomatic opposition and small-scale military harassment. Britain, Australia and New Zealand were supporting Malaysia, but once again the Americans were reluctant to take steps that would antagonize the Indonesians. The linkage between Vietnam and Indonesia in Australian minds was most clearly demonstrated in May 1964, when the Johnson administration made a concerted effort to have "more flags" in Vietnam. The *Chargé d'Affaires* at the Australian Embassy in Washington, Alan Renouf, reported to Canberra that United States policy on the Indonesian-Malaysian Confrontation was not as "firm" (that is, supportive of Malaysia) as Australia would wish. Vietnam, he therefore suggested, was an area where Australia could pick up credit in Washington. Australia should seek "to achieve such an habitual closeness of relations with the United States and sense of mutual alliance that in our time of need . . . the United States would have little option but to respond as we would want".⁶

The relationship between Australian policy towards Indochina, especially Vietnam, and that towards Indonesia was complex, especially in late 1964 and early 1965. Australian policy makers had to balance pressure from the United Kingdom, to give greater military support to Malaysia against Indonesia, against pressure from the United States, to support its effort in South Vietnam. The commitment of an Australian battalion of combat troops to Vietnam in April 1965 is widely remembered, having been seen at the time and ever since as a significant step in Australian defence and foreign policies. By contrast, the similar

commitment of another battalion only a few weeks earlier, to support the British and Malaysian effort in Borneo, has generally been forgotten. The crucial decisions on Vietnam by Australian policy-makers were taken in an atmosphere of conflicting pressures from two "great and powerful friends" over two different conflicts in southeast Asia. Indeed, uppermost in their minds at some crucial times was the possibility of a third conflict, which they thought might be precipitated by Indonesian subversion and infiltration into the Australian-administered territories in eastern New Guinea. We now know that this never came to pass, just as we know that the Indonesian-Malaysian Confrontation eased in late 1965 and formally ended in 1966; but that could not be foreseen by the policy-makers in late 1964 and early 1965.

Another element marks a major difference in the paths by which the United States and Australia came to be in Vietnam. Unlike the United States, Australia had been involved in the campaign against communist insurgents in Malaya in the 1950s, generally known as the Malayan Emergency. When the state of emergency was declared in 1948 the Australian Government, under Labor Prime Minister, J.B. (Ben) Chifley, had resisted pressure from London to give military support to the battle against the insurgency, but in 1950 the newly elected Liberal Government, under Prime Minister Menzies, sent bombers and transport aircraft of the Royal Australian Air Force.⁷ In 1955 the commitment was significantly increased when Australia sent troops and other elements from all three armed services to Malaya, to join British and New Zealand elements in forming the Commonwealth Far East Strategic Reserve. These forces helped the British and Malayan forces fighting the insurgents, both before and after Malaya gained its independence in 1957, and until the Emergency was declared over in 1960.

In several respects the commitment was comparable with that in Vietnam in the 1960s. Australia was responding to a request from one of its great and powerful friends to intervene in a campaign to put down a communist insurgency in the jungles of southeast Asia, in a country which was, or had been, a European colony. It saw the conflict as a theatre of the Cold War, not as the suppression of Asian nationalism. Australia had reservations about the wisdom of some of the tactics used by its major ally, but having taken the decision to intervene it remained a firm and loyal ally.

During the early years of the commitment in Malaya there were critics who argued that Australia was placing itself on the wrong side of Asian nationalism. This western military intervention, they claimed, would make Australia highly unpopular as soon as British colonial rule was replaced by an independent government. This claim was disproved when Malaya gained its independence in 1957 and its freely elected government asked the Australian and other Commonwealth forces to stay. They did so, and in 1960 the Australian Government could claim part of the credit for a success. The communist insurgency had been

defeated and Malaya had an independent, pro-western government with which Australia had excellent relations. On the basis of this experience, it was understandable that a few years later the Australian Government was inclined to believe that intervention in Vietnam need not necessarily lead to disaster; while the critics who rightly pointed to the dangers of involvement in Vietnam had had their credibility weakened, like the boy who cried "Wolf".

This is not to say that Australians saw the commitment in Vietnam as simply a repetition of the successful venture in Malaya. The ethnic, geographic, religious, political, military and other differences, which made the position in Vietnam so much more difficult for the west, were well understood before the principal Australian commitment was made.⁸ Nevertheless there is evidence that the comparison was very much in Australian minds. When considering precedents for the position in Vietnam, Americans generally thought of Korea, while Australians remembered Malaya.

This raises the question of public attitudes. This paper is concerned essentially with governmental decisions, but in a parliamentary democracy these decisions must take note of the attitudes of both the Opposition in Parliament and extra-parliamentary groups. For the Australian Labor Party (ALP) these were the years in the wilderness, as it remained out of office at the federal level from 1949 to 1972. The length of ALP exclusion was caused largely by a major split in 1955, when a section of the party broke away and subsequently formed the Democratic Labor Party (DLP). The DLP, predominantly Catholic in membership, was vehemently anti-communist in both domestic and foreign policy, accusing the ALP of being too sympathetic to communists. Although the number of seats won by the DLP in federal and state parliaments was small, their influence on the outcome of elections was considerable because of the preferential nature of Australian electoral systems. The existence of the DLP was therefore an additional reason for the government to maintain a resolutely anti-communist stance in foreign affairs.

The ALP was weakened in the late 1950s and early 1960s not only by this split, but by divisions within its own ranks. Although factions within the party were not then as institutionalized as they later became, there was a clear division between a left and a right wing, made particularly obvious by the issue of the VLF station at North-West Cape. The left was suspicious of the United States and reluctant to be associated in any way with nuclear weapons; the right emphasized its loyalty to the American alliance and was not far from holding the same views as the government in most aspects of foreign policy. As policy towards southeast Asia came towards the top of the political agenda in the 1960s, this division vitiated the ALP's criticisms of the government's policies. Not until after the government had committed the first battalion of combat troops did the ALP unite behind a firm policy of opposition to

the commitment. Its leader, Arthur A. Calwell, gave a powerful, and in some respects prescient, speech foreshadowing many of the problems that were to become evident in later years;⁹ but by this time it was much too late to have any effect on government policy.

Outside Parliament there were several groups who could together be categorized as an anti-war movement, but they remained on the margins of politics in the 1950s and early 1960s. In 1949 an Australian Peace Council was formed, effectively a branch of the World Peace Council, bringing together communists, Christians and intellectuals. In the 1950s this council organized a major congress, at which the principal guest speaker was the Dean of Canterbury, England, Dr Hewlett Johnson, widely known as "the Red Dean" for his admiration for Stalin and the Soviet Union. In a highly publicized and controversial tour of Australia, Johnson described communism as "a Christian movement that is surging upward in every part of the world" and he advised Australia not to become involved in an "imperialistic" war, "a war against the people" in Malaya.¹⁰ Not surprisingly, Menzies and other conservatives came to regard the clergymen and other non-communists in the anti-war groups as naive dupes of the communists, used to provide a respectable front for a movement which existed essentially to support Soviet policies and oppose those of the west. Thus, when a group of Anglican bishops wrote to Menzies in early 1965 to urge him to support a negotiated rather than a military solution in Vietnam, they were given little credibility.¹¹ Their arguments had decidedly more substance than those of Dr Johnson and the clergymen known as "the peace parsons" in the 1950s, but the Government and the public had become accustomed to dismissing views from this quarter as naive and ill-founded.

In fact the anti-war movement by the mid-1960s was becoming much less the exclusive property of those who adopted a basically pro-Soviet line. The Communist Party of Australia was much weaker than it had been in the years immediately after the 1939-1945 war, and middle-class liberals were beginning to draw attention to issues in and around the Pacific, such as Chinese and French nuclear tests, rather than more remote concerns like Algeria and Cuba. Congresses in 1959 and 1964 helped to give the movement a stronger administrative structure, but this was not to become evident until later. As late as October 1964, just before the introduction of conscription and six months before the principal commitment to Vietnam, an anti-war congress seemed as ineffectual and marginal as ever. It was only after the first conscripts were sent to Vietnam in 1966 that a significant protest movement emerged. Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, the Government could claim broad public support for its policy of close alliance with the United States and the United Kingdom in opposition, by military means if necessary, to the expansion of communist influence in southeast Asia.

Australia, therefore, came to be involved in Vietnam by a path that was similar, but by no means identical, to that of the United States.

Australian policy was not merely a clone or an echo of that of its superpower ally. Australian policy-makers had their own concerns and took their own decisions. They deserve the credit for those decisions that proved wise, and they cannot escape the blame for those that proved unwise.

¹ The evidence on which this paper is based will be found in the writer's forthcoming volume, provisionally entitled *Crises and Commitments: Australian Involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts 1948-1965*, which will form part of the Official History of Australia's involvement in the Malayan Emergency, the Indonesian-Malaysian Confrontation and the Vietnam War.

² The precise number of participants, and the breakdown of types of casualty figures is contained in the table given in footnote 5 in Jane Ross. "Veterans in Australia: the Search for Integration", in this volume, : 50-73..

³ Alan Renouf. *The Frightened Country*, Macmillan, Melbourne, 1979; Malcolm Booker. *The Last Domino, Aspects of Australia's Foreign Relations*, Collins, Sydney, 1976.

⁴ *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, vol. H[ouse]of R[epresentatives] 43, 13 August 1964, pp.184-5.

⁵ Glen St. J. Barclay. *A Very Small Insurance Policy: The Politics of Australian Involvement in Vietnam, 1954-1967*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 1988.

⁶ The cable is quoted extensively in Michael Sexton. *War for the Asking: Australia's Vietnam Secrets*, Penguin, Ringwood, pp. 44-45.

⁷ See Peter Edwards. "The Australian commitment to the Malayan emergency, 1948-1950", *Historical Studies*, 22, (No.89), October 1987, pp. 604-16.

⁸ See, for example, the comments by Liberal (that is, conservative) Member of Parliament, sometime Minister of Defence, and Prime Minister from 1975-1983, Malcolm Fraser in *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, vol. H of R 43, 13 August 1964, p. 194.

⁹ A.A. Calwell in *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, vol. H of R 46, 4 May 1965, pp.1102-07.

¹⁰ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17, 20, 21, 24 and 26 April 1950.

¹¹ The exchange of letters was published as *Vietnam: Exchange of Letters between the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Sir Robert Menzies, K.T., C.H., M.P., and the Rt. Rev. J.S. Moyes, C.M.G., and certain Archbishops and Bishops*, Prime Minister's Department, Canberra, 20 April 1965.

Vietnam as History: the Australian Case

Jeffrey Grey

War has played a large part in the shaping of Australian society and national identity, but occupies a much less prominent part in the writing of the nation's history. And in contrast to the situation in the United States, where the flood of published material of all types threatens to overwhelm the student of the subject, Australian historical writing on the Vietnam War is still in the early and tentative stages of development.¹ Equally, because Australia's involvement was smaller in relative terms than America's, and because that involvement did not pose such fundamental questions for Australians, there is less to be said about it.

Participation in the two world wars was followed by the commissioning of large, multi-authored official histories which, for their time, were remarkably sophisticated and thorough. Indeed the history of Australian efforts in the First World War, and more especially its editor and principal author C.E.W. Bean, has had a long-lasting influence upon the shape of historical writing on war in this country.² In contrast to the official histories elsewhere, written often to defend as well as explain the conduct of the war, Bean's history concerned itself with the extraordinary deeds of ordinary men, the soldiers themselves, and had less to say about strategy and virtually nothing on generalship, logistics or administration. The history written after the Second World War, edited by Gavin Long, took its cue from Bean and again concentrated on a trench level view of the fighting, although because of the vastly greater mobilisation of national resources involved between 1939-45 this series devoted much more attention to activities in the domestic economy and society.

In both world wars Australian correspondents were attached to the forces to report on their activities, and in both cases a decision was made to commission an official history before the conflict had ended. In the numerous smaller wars and warlike actions in which Australia found itself engaged after 1945—in Japan on occupation duty and in the Korean War, Malayan Emergency, Indonesian Confrontation and Vietnam—histories were commissioned long after the events they were to analyse, and the authors appointed had no first hand experience of these conflicts. The history of the Korean War was completed only in 1985,³ and an official historian for the postwar southeast Asian conflicts, of which Vietnam is the centrepiece so to speak, was appointed only in 1983. The restrictions of the relevant archival legislation which, as in

Britain, precludes public access to government records until they are thirty years old, together with the absence, as yet, of any official history as was published for earlier conflicts, means that Australian writing on the Vietnam War lacks an authoritative official work which establishes the record and against which others may react or from which they may take a lead.

A number of journalists in Australia wrote about Australian involvement during the Vietnam War, and of course there was a large and active anti-war publishing effort. By its nature little of the latter has survived, while the former often belonged to a tradition of Australian war writing which went back to Chester Wilmot and Kenneth Slessor in the Second World War, if not indeed to Bean himself—factual writing about the experiences and conditions of the troops in the field of a kind common to war correspondents everywhere.⁴ After a new Australian government withdrew the last of its forces in 1972, Vietnam disappeared quickly from the national agenda. With one or two exceptions it was not to receive serious attention again as a subject for nearly a decade.

The contemporary debate over Australian participation in the war continues to be reflected in most of the history written in the last decade. The universities were a focal point for anti-war activism at the height of the war, and some academics took a leading role in opposition “teach-ins” and street protests. Others, of course, supported government policy, but they have been much more reticent subsequently. Indeed, it is almost impossible now to find anyone who defends seriously the stated aims for which Australia went to war in Vietnam.

In response to the fall of Saigon in 1975, the Labor Prime Minister, E.G. (Gough) Whitlam, directed the Department of Foreign Affairs to prepare a paper on the Australian commitment, and this was tabled in the Parliament on 13 May.⁵ Much of the paper was taken up with an examination of the process by which Australian forces had been committed, with further attention given to the several increases in Australian troop strength undertaken between 1966-67. Arguing that “the decision in April 1965 to send a battalion for active service in South Vietnam was the crucial issue in Australia’s commitment”, the paper devoted most space to the events surrounding the “request” for direct military support from the South Vietnamese Government. In announcing the decision to send troops the then Prime Minister of the Liberal Government, Sir Robert Menzies, had stated that his Government acted upon such a request, although it was never in fact produced. As it transpired, there had been no such request. Rather, the Government of Dr Phan Huy Quat had agreed to the despatch of Australian troops after this had been arranged between the Australian and American Governments and he himself had been pressured into acceptance. The Menzies Government saw a request as necessary in order that Australian action could be explained under the terms of the SEATO Treaty—which precluded action by member countries like Australia on the territory of

protocol states such as South Vietnam except at the specific request of their governments—although in this instance SEATO was never actually invoked.

Critics then and subsequently were quick to seize on the issue of the “request”, and to use the circumstances under which it was produced as proof that the Australian Government acted contrary to the wishes of the South Vietnamese and at the behest of the United States.⁶ While there can be little doubt about the contrived nature of the request in 1965, this attitude ignored the fact that a succession of South Vietnamese Government officials had called upon Australia for various forms of non-specific military assistance in the years since 1961. A more complex interpretation of the steps leading to Australian involvement has gradually appeared, and this emphasises both that Vietnam was not the central issue in Australian thinking at this time, and that the Australian Government acted with greater concern for Australian interests than earlier critics had allowed.

Australian defence and foreign policy has been characterised by a search for security tied to the guarantees of a great and powerful friend. Until the fall of Singapore this was provided by Britain, but the aftermath of the Second World War served to emphasise Britain’s falling imperial might, and while Australia never switched allegiance to the United States in the unthinking manner sometimes portrayed, increasingly in the 1950s and early 1960s the Australian Government saw the preponderant Western role in southeast Asia as an American one. The ANZUS Treaty, signed in 1951, had provided non-specific assurances but in the changing strategic environment of the early 1960s this was felt to be insufficient should Australian interests be threatened directly. This threat was perceived as coming not from China, despite Menzies’ public statements about “the downward thrust of Asian communism”, but from Indonesia.

Australia had viewed with concern the Indonesian incorporation of the former Dutch possession of West New Guinea in 1961, and Sukarno’s policy of “confrontation” with Malaysia, in which Australian troops were involved from 1964 by virtue of existing defence ties with the British and Malaysian Governments, heightened alarm in Canberra. In a major study of Australian foreign policy at this time, historian Gregory Pemberton has shown the paramount importance of the relationship with Indonesia for any understanding of Australian Vietnam policy:⁷ Australian efforts to ensure that the United States increased and maintained its commitment in southeast Asia were directed to containing Sukarno as much as they were to preventing the further expansion of communist power in Indochina. Other writers have taken the interpretation of this activist policy stance further, however, in arguing that the American Government would not have expanded its own involvement in Vietnam in 1965 but for the persistent and continuous badgering of the Australian Government, which sought to provide the

diplomatic preconditions which would make an American combat commitment possible.⁸ Of course, it may be objected at once that this explanatory tail wags the historical dog, and that such a view ignores entirely the numerous domestic pressures within the United States itself which led President Johnson to increase substantially the American combat presence. Perhaps the most interesting thing about this argument is that it flies in the face of a tradition of Australian historical writing, especially on the left, which sees Australian foreign policy as reactive and entirely at the disposal of one or other great power.

In the context of the war as a whole, the actual Australian commitment was of marginal significance. At its height, the Australian Task Force in Phuoc Tuy province numbered 8300 men. Approximately 50,000 served in total, of whom 500 were killed and over 2000 wounded.⁹ Against the peak troop presence of the Koreans (50,000) or Thais (11,500), much less the ARVN or the US, it was a tiny effort. But there are other ways of assessing the Australian military contribution. Not only were Australians the first of the Free World Military Assistance Forces to join the US in the field, but unlike the Koreans and Thais, they and the New Zealanders bore the costs of the deployment themselves. As a force from a stable western liberal democracy in Asia their presence lent credibility to Johnson's call for "more flags" in Vietnam, while their undoubted military effectiveness reinforced further the value of the contribution.¹⁰

Australia's military effort has been looked at from two perspectives: in terms of the combat experience and, less frequently, from a strategic and institutional viewpoint. Personal experience is a strong suit in Australian military writing, the tradition descending in an unbroken line from Dr Bean and the First World War, and the bulk of the work in this category has recounted the war from a unit or individual perspective. A number of army units produced illustrated accounts of their tours of duty, but only one was published commercially.¹¹ The passage of time has neutralised most of the controversy generated by an unpopular war, and Vietnam is now being incorporated into the mainstream of the Australian military tradition in a number of accounts.¹² This attitude is reflected in some, although by no means all, of the memoirs and personal recollections. Those written by regulars have tended to dwell on the positive features of military service and have reserved criticism for the perceived lack of support for their efforts in Australia.¹³ Other accounts are much more critical of the army itself, or are bitter at the ingratitude of the civilian population back home, an attitude which many national servicemen [conscripts] first encountered only after their return from active service.¹⁴ The sense of hostility and even despair which these accounts portray is much more resonant within the small number of combat novels written by Australian authors, although most of the latter were not written by combat veterans.¹⁵

There are a number of more sophisticated treatments of Australia's operational involvement, at both the unit and higher levels. The first Australian combat troops were committed in 1962 as part of a training and advisory mission which later worked through the US Special Forces network and, later still, had some part in the Phoenix programme. This unit's diverse and difficult tasks have been treated at great length,¹⁶ in a manner which combines successfully the emphasis on individual experience which is so important in the Australian military tradition with some pertinent analysis of the policy which governed the Training Team's deployment. The first Australian battalion to see action in 1965–1966, as part of the US 173rd Airborne Brigade in Bien Hoa province, has also been treated at length.¹⁷ The circumstances of this unit's deployment, and the undoubted difficulties which ensued from attaching the battalion to a larger force which operated on different doctrinal and administrative assumptions, allows the author to contrast unfavourably American tactical shortcomings with Australian professionalism, thus reinforcing one of the central tenets of the Australian military myth. The same process is at work in the official account of the Special Air Service Regiment, a book which fulfills the additional function of demonstrating, at least to the author's satisfaction, the continuing utility of special forces in the Australian army.¹⁸

A wider perspective is rare, and there has been almost no institutional or systemic analysis of the army in this period. The army went to Vietnam immediately following a period of considerable organisational upheaval resulting from the adoption and then abandonment of the Pentropic division,¹⁹ and with a command and control system which, at least initially, was not as well suited to the political-military demands placed upon it as arguably it needed to be.²⁰ There is only one analysis of the Australian Task Force's operations overall in Vietnam between 1966-72, and this is at times highly critical of the perceived absence of "a coherent and effective military role on the ground".²¹ The author's overall contention that because the war in Vietnam was lost Australia's role in Phuoc Tuy province was a failure implies a misunderstanding of the relationship between the operational and strategic levels of war, but other criticisms concerning, for example, the construction of the Dat Do-Phuoc Hai minefield or the failure of the Australians to take over the province advisory role from the Americans are well sustained. The tone overall is too critical, but the absence to date of a countervailing view is striking.²²

The sociology of the forces at this time is likewise a neglected field, although it should be added that this is true for all of Australia's wars. The difference, however, is that only in this war were conscripts sent on active service outside Australian territory,²³ and it is the conscript element of the army, about one-third only of those who served in Vietnam, which has attracted scholarly attention, most notably in the work of Jane Ross.²⁴ The specific weakness of this work is that it

relegates the regular army majority to the peripheries, while the absence of any wider study of the national service scheme as a whole robs it of necessary context and comparison.

Conscription itself was reintroduced in April 1964, before any decision had been made about deploying combat units to Vietnam and in the context again of fears about an intensified Indonesian insurgency in Borneo. Indeed, it is not widely known that both the army and the Department of Labour and National Service opposed the reintroduction of the scheme, citing the experience in the 1950s when national servicemen had been required to perform only six months compulsory training and had had no overseas service obligation. The deployment of conscripts on active service in Vietnam, beginning in mid-1966, sparked growing opposition within Australia at a level not seen since the bitterly fought conscription referenda during the First World War. Curiously, this aspect of Australia's Vietnam War has been least frequently and least satisfactorily dealt with in the historical literature.²⁵ The Moratorium movement, as anti-conscription, anti-war activism came to be called, still awaits its historian, although the documentary legacy of the various oppositional groupings is rich and varied and a number of postgraduate theses have been written on aspects of the subject. Published work remains thin. Much of it is written by former activists and has a defensive tone, while other authors are at pains to demonstrate a tradition of anti-war dissent and the existence of a peace movement throughout our history, as if this somehow validates the movement in the 1960s.²⁶ There are important legal, constitutional, political and moral issues involved in the imposition of national service for Vietnam, but only a handful of writers seem concerned to follow them through.²⁷

Overviews of the Australian war have been few, and generally mixed in quality. The earliest contribution in this area, a series of essays published in the early 1980s,²⁸ suffered from the usual problems of edited works and provided an uneasy mix of academic work with personal recollection. A similar effort produced at the end of the decade suffered from many of the same faults.²⁹ Both books bring together a variety of perspectives critical of Australian involvement, but the quality of the scholarship is uneven and the strident authorial voice employed sits ill with attempts to provide a detached—which is not to say disengaged—perspective on events which occurred before a sizeable section of the Australian population was born.

The legacy of the Vietnam War, in Australia as in the United States, is demonstrated most clearly by the large influx of Indochinese migrants and refugees since 1975, and by the continuing fight for recognition by Vietnam veterans. Asian immigration has long been a political issue in Australia, a nation which until the 1960s excluded non-white migrants through the provisions of the Immigration Act in the interests of a white Australia policy. Despite the best attempts of the racist fringe, and the occasional unwise sally by more establishment

figures, Australian society has absorbed Indochinese migrants, as it has the earlier waves of European and Middle Eastern migrants who have arrived since the Second World War, without significant social upheaval.³⁰ The problems of Vietnam veterans are both more public and more vexed. The Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia was formed in 1980 as a result of dissatisfaction with existing veterans' groups, principally the Returned Services League, and with the bureaucracy of the Department of Veterans' Affairs. It represents no more than 5,000 members, about one-tenth of those eligible, but has played a prominent role as a ginger group in veterans' politics, especially over the cluster of issues surrounding Agent Orange and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, which is claimed by some to be more prevalent in this group of veterans than in any other.³¹ As in the United States, there is a clear perception that this generation has not been accorded the recognition and level of public esteem enjoyed, in particular, by soldiers of the Second World War. In the Australian case at least this is to assume that the latter was typical of the public response to returning service personnel throughout the twentieth century, a proposition which must be qualified fairly heavily. In the United States, the historiographical battle lines in most cases match those drawn politically during the war; the arguments of the 1980s in many cases have not advanced much beyond those of the 1960s. In Australia, on the other hand, the moral argument to some extent has shifted from the political arena of the 1960s and 1970s to the field of veterans' entitlements in the 1980s and 1990s. Whatever advance it may represent otherwise, it has not helped in the clear analysis of veterans' issues.

As the archives begin to open in the next decade we can expect an increase in the number of works dealing with Australian participation in the war, and can hope for an improvement in the scholarly and evidential base of research in some of the areas noted above. Given the lines along which the writing of Australian military history has developed in the 75 years since the First World War, it is by no means obvious that this will result in a broadening of the focus of the work which results.

1 This article will concern itself with writing on Australian involvement in Vietnam, and will not deal with the important work on the wider war by scholars such as David G. Marr and Carlyle Thayer, both Americans long resident in Australia, or of Australians such as David Chandler and Ben Kiernan.

² See Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey. "Australian and New Zealand Writing on the First World War", in Jürgen Rohwer (ed). *Neue Forschungen zum Ersten Weltkrieg*, Koblenz, 1985.

³ Robert O'Neill. *Australia in the Korean War 1950-53*. Volume I *Strategy and Diplomacy*, Canberra, 1983; Volume II *Combat Operations*, Canberra, 1985.

⁴ Vietnam examples are Gerald L. Stone. *War without Honour*, Jacaranda Press, Melbourne, 1966 and Ian Mackay. *Australians in Vietnam*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1968.

⁵ [R.G. Neale]. "Australia's Military Commitment to Vietnam", Commonwealth Parliamentary Paper, 13 May 1975.

⁶ For a good example see Greg Lockhart. "Fear and Dependence: Australia's Vietnam Policy, 1965-1985", in Kenneth Maddock & Barry Wright (eds). *War: Australia and Vietnam*, Harper & Row, Sydney, 1987, pp. 11-36.

⁷ Gregory Pemberton. *All the Way. Australia's Road to Vietnam*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1987.

⁸ Glen St.J. Barclay. *A Very Small Insurance Policy. The Politics of Australian Involvement in Vietnam, 1954-1967*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1988. A milder statement of the thesis is contained in Michael Sexton. *War for the Asking. Australia's Vietnam Secrets*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1981.

⁹ See the table given in footnote 5 of Jane Ross. "Veterans in Australia: the Search for Integration", in this volume, pp. 50-73.

¹⁰ Small air and naval units were attached to US forces also. See Denis Fairfax. *Royal Australian Navy in Vietnam*, Australian Government Publishing Services, Canberra, 1980, and George Odgers. *Mission Vietnam. Royal Australian Air Force Operations, 1964-1972*, Australian Government Publishing Services, Canberra, 1974.

¹¹ Robert O'Neill. *Vietnam Task. The 5th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, 1966-67*, Cassell, Australia Ltd., Melbourne, 1968. The author was later official historian for the Korean War, Director of the International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, and is now Chichele Professor of the History of War at Oxford University.

¹² Especially in the work of Lex McAulay. See *The Battle of Long Tan. The Legend of Anzac Upheld*, Hutchinson, Melbourne, 1986; *The Battle of Coral. Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral May 1968*, Hutchinson, Melbourne, 1988; and his heavily illustrated *Contact. Australians in Vietnam*, Hutchinson Melbourne, 1989.

¹³ Gary McKay. *In Good Company. One Man's War in Vietnam*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1986; Barry Petersen, *Tiger Men. An Australian Soldier's Secret War in Vietnam*, Macmillan, Melbourne, 1988.

¹⁴ Terry Burstall. *The Soldier's Story. The Battle of Xa Long Tan*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 1986; Martin Cameron. *Australia's Longest War*, author, 1987.

¹⁵ An exception is a collection of short stories, poems and recollections, John J. Coe (ed). *Desperate Praise. The Australians in Vietnam*, Artlook, Perth, 1982. For an analysis of Australian fiction from the war, see Robin Gerster. "Occidental tourists: the ugly Australian in Vietnam War narrative", and Peter Pierce. "Australian and American literature of the Vietnam War", both in Peter Pierce, Jeffrey Grey & Jeff Doyle (eds). *Vietnam Days*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1991; see also Peter Pierce. "The Funny Place': Australian literature and the War in Vietnam", in this volume, pp. 98-108.

¹⁶ Ian McNeill. *The Team. Australian Army Advisers in Vietnam, 1962-1972*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1984.

¹⁷ Bob Breen. *First to Fight-Australian Diggers, NZ Kiwis and US Paratroopers in Vietnam 1965-66*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1988.

¹⁸ D.M. Horner. SAS. *Phantoms of the Jungle. A history of the Special Air Service*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1990.

¹⁹ J.C. Blaxland. *Organising an Army: The Australian Experience 1957-1965*, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Canberra, 1989.

²⁰ D.M. Horner. *Australian Higher Command in the Vietnam War*, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence 40, The Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1986.

²¹ Frank Frost. *Australia's War in Vietnam*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1987.

²² The major countervailing view will be advanced by the official history, to be published in the mid-1990s. A foretaste may be had through Ian McNeill. "The Australian Army and the Vietnam War", in Peter Pierce, *et al* (eds). *Vietnam Days*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1991.

²³ Conscription was enacted in 1943, but for domestic political reasons was hedged with so many qualifications that in effect Australian conscripts did not serve outside the south-west Pacific Area. The emotional edge which conscription for overseas service possesses in Australia is another legacy of the First World War.

²⁴ Some 17,000 of the 50,000 Australians who served in Vietnam were national servicemen, or conscripts. See Jane Ross. "The Australian Army—Some Views from the Bottom", *Australian Quarterly*, 46:3, 1974, pp. 35-47; "The Conscript Experience in Vietnam", *Australian Outlook*, 29:3, 1975, pp. 315-322; "Australian Soldiers in Vietnam: Product and Performance", in Peter King (ed). *Australia's Vietnam. Australia in the Second Indochina War*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1983, pp. 72-99.

²⁵ The only study of conscription and government policy is Henry S. Albinski, *Politics and Foreign Policy in Australia: the impact of Vietnam and conscription*, Duke University Press, Durham, North Carolina, 1970, which was written without access to official records and before the end of the Australian commitment.

²⁶ Work by participants includes Barry York. "Police, students and dissent: Melbourne, 1966-1972", *Journal of Australian Studies*, 14, May 1984, pp. 58-76; K. Maddock. "Opposing the war in Vietnam—the Australian experience", in John Dumbrell (ed). *Vietnam and the Antiwar Movement. An International Perspective*, Avebury, London, 1989; Michael E. Hamel-Green. "The resisters: a history of the anti-conscription movement, 1964-1972", in Peter King (ed). *Australia's Vietnam*, 1983, pp. 100-28; Charlotte Clutterbuck. "Protests and Peace Marches: From Vietnam to Palm Sunday", in Kenneth Maddock & Barry Wright (eds). *War: Australia and Vietnam*, Harper & Row, Sydney, 1987, pp. 135-147.

²⁷ See Malcolm Saunders. "The ALP's Response to the Anti-Vietnam War Movement: 1965-73", *Labour History*, 44, May 1983, pp. 75-91; and "'Law and Order' and the Anti-Vietnam War Movement: 1965-72", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 28:3, 1982, pp. 367-79; Hugh Smith. "Conscience, Law and the State: Australia's Approach to Conscientious Objection since 1901", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 35:1, 1989, pp. 13-28; and "Conscientious Objection to Particular Wars: Australia's Experience during the Vietnam War, 1965-1972", *War & Society*, 8:1, May 1990; Kim Beazley. "Federal Labor and the Vietnam Commitment", in Peter King (ed). *Australia's Vietnam*, 1983, pp. 36-55.

²⁸ Peter King (ed). *Australia's Vietnam*, 1983.

²⁹ Gregory Pemberton (ed). *Vietnam Remembered*, Weldon, Sydney, 1990.

³⁰ On the absorption of Indochinese migrants see Nancy Viviani. *The Long Journey: Vietnamese migration and settlement in Australia*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1984.

³¹ The literature on veterans is scattered and patchy. For some of the arguments, and a guide to the literature, see Jeffrey Grey. "Anzac, Vietnam and the veteran", in Peter Pierce, *et al* (eds). *Vietnam Days*, 1991; and Jane Ross. "Australia's Legacy. The Vietnam Veterans", in Gregory Pemberton (ed). *Vietnam Remembered*, 1990, pp. 187-213.

Policy Contradictions of the Australian Task Force, Vietnam, 1966

Terry Burstall

Introduction

The dispatch of a two battalion Task Force to Phuoc Tuy Province South Vietnam in 1966 was a progression from the 1962 commitment to South Vietnam of a small team of military advisers. As the internal military and political situation of the Government of South Vietnam deteriorated from 1960, so United States military support increased. As American support grew it became increasingly important for other countries to be seen to be in agreement with United States actions and objectives in Vietnam not only verbally but also physically. Correspondingly the size of the small team of Australian advisers was increased to 83 by the end of 1964, and in April 1965 Australia responded willingly to United States requests for more support by announcing the commitment of a combat battalion to South Vietnam. In 1966, in line with further United States troop level increases, the Australian force was increased to a self contained two battalion Task Force to be based in Phuoc Tuy Province, 60 mile east of Saigon.

Although the Australian Government supported the United States' actions in Vietnam, it was apparent from 1962 that active support would be curtailed by domestic political and organizational realities in Australia. Political reality lay in the fact that the involvement was not based upon a bi-partisan decision of the Australian Parliament, and that it did not depend on tested electoral support from Australian voters.¹ The organizational reality was the size and quality of the forces that could be sent to Vietnam. As the Australian Army in 1965 only consisted of four battalions it required a major re-organization and upgrading to prepare for a commitment to Vietnam. By necessity the Australian force had to remain extremely small in relation to the rapidly increasing United States effort.

The disparity of size of the two countries' commitments meant that if Australian forces remained closely tied to United States forces they could only be minor players in a much larger effort and would of necessity have to be under direct United States command. To achieve some autonomy of command it was therefore considered desirable in 1966 to move the Task Force to an area where it could establish an Australian national presence. The Australian command could then make its own policy decisions, maintain its own unit integrity and apply its own tactics while still being incorporated, and able to work within, overall United States command.

This article will examine two policy decisions made by the Australian Task Force in 1966 which locked it into postures that were impossible to move away from in the following years of the involvement. The two areas to be examined are: the policies toward sections of the civilian population of the province; and the creation of a large defended base camp. This article will argue that these decisions seriously affected: 1) Australian and United States capacity to win the population to the side of the Government of Vietnam; and 2) the capacity of the Australians to work within United States operational concepts and strategies.

Background

Australian involvement in Vietnam was primarily an attempt to secure an insurance policy with the United States of America should Australian interests be challenged in southeast Asia. The surge of nationalism sweeping the world during the 1950s and 1960s, the impending withdrawal of British troops from "East of Suez" and the perceived spectre of a communist and antagonistic Indonesia aligned with China, meant the Australian Government willingly embraced the policies of the United States in southeast Asia as a means of securing military aid in its own time of need.

As the United States involvement in Vietnam increased from 1960, Australia responded to requests for visible moral support. In 1962 a small Army Training Team component of 30 men flew to Vietnam and was placed under United States command, officially to be used in a training role only. By 1964, in response to United States pressure, this component was increased to 83 and their role had been expanded to include participation in combat situations.

Due to the run down of the Australian Army at that time and the extra pressures placed on Australia's expanding training base because of the introduction of National Service (the draft), it was impossible to increase the numbers of Training Team personnel to meet United States demands. The decision was made therefore in December 1964 to offer instead a battalion of combat troops. At the time, this offer was inappropriate because the United States had no combat units in Vietnam and a battalion could not have been incorporated into their military structure. However, with the landing of the Marines at Da Nang in March 1965, and the subsequent arrival of other United States units, the Australian offer of a battalion became a viable proposition.

The First Battalion

The First Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment was sent to Vietnam in May/June 1965 and became part of the United States 173rd Airborne Brigade based at Bien Hoa airbase. However, placing the battalion with the 173rd created problems for both the United States and Australian commanders in Vietnam. The concept and role of the battalion laid down by the Australian Army and the Government in

Canberra was restricted originally to securing military installations and supporting South Vietnamese or United States forces under attack. This role was not flexible enough for General Westmoreland (Commander, United States Military Assistance Command Vietnam). Difficulties arose in July when the Australian battalion was prohibited from participating in a 173rd Brigade operation by the Australian Chief of Staff.² The role of the force was later expanded and by the end of 1965 the Australians were permitted to engage in offensive operations in the whole of III (Three) Corps area.

Tension still remained, however, as the Australians were not impressed with the United States style of combat operations, neither with respect to their methods of continuous resupply nor with the apparent disregard by United States officers of their own level of casualties. By the end of 1965 it was apparent that the circumstances facing the First Battalion were not the best possible for the Australian forces, not only from the Australian perspective but also from Westmoreland's.

Westmoreland used the 173rd Brigade as his mobile reserve, which meant that they had to be able to move to any part of South Vietnam as required. In June 1966 he was considering sending the 173rd to Darlac Province in II (Two) Corps on the Cambodian border, and recorded: "These troops will be moving constantly and their operations will be in support of ARVN [Army of the Republic of Vietnam], RF/PF [Regional Force and Popular Force] and CIDG [Civil Irregular Defence Group] units."³ To be left short of a battalion because of Australian refusal to allow their forces to move to a certain area was unacceptable to the United States. That there were also tensions arising from the Australian perspective was made clear when the Australian Army Department Secretary was reported to have said: "We found ourselves in Bien Hoa with the United States forces on one side and the Vietnamese on the other and we quickly decided that the best place to be was somewhere else."⁴

By March 1966 it had been decided that Australia would increase the size of its commitment and send to Vietnam a self-contained Task Force of two battalions to replace the First Battalion which was due to return home in June 1966. This was a calculated gamble because a two battalion Task Force was not a balanced force according to contemporary military doctrine, which held that a Task Force should be at least three battalions, giving it the ability to have two battalions in the field and one operating as base defence. Having only two battalions meant that of the 4500 Australian troops in Vietnam at any one time, less than half were combat troops—infantry and supporting arms—and operations would be limited to one battalion strength.

Planning the move to Phuoc Tuy

Lieutenant General John Wilton, the Chief of the General Staff, and a party of service personnel flew from Australia to Saigon for discussions with General Westmoreland on the role and placement of the Task Force in March 1966. Discussions on the placement had already taken place between General Westmoreland and the Commander of Australian Army Force Vietnam (COMAAFV), Brigadier O.D. Jackson, and agreement was reached on Phuoc Tuy Province.⁵ Jackson commented that, "we were to be used somewhere where we could do the job and it would suit our ability. This area of the north [Demilitarized Zone] was to be left as I understood it to the the Americans and the Vietnamese."⁶ He went on to say:

They [the United States] had some difficulty with foreign troops and they weren't too sure how things would work out. I think Westmoreland was happy to have us in a place where we could do things our way and not be exposed in the early days to heavy casualties, which was made pretty clear to me [from Australia] just wasn't on.⁷

General Wilton had already decided tentatively upon Phuoc Tuy before he arrived in Vietnam in March 1966, mainly because of the deep water port at Vung Tau and the fact that the Australian force would be well away from the northern demilitarized zone.⁸ Westmoreland was by then in agreement with the move to Phuoc Tuy and wanted the Australians to work in the eastern portion of the Rung Sat and provide protection for Highway 15, running from the port of Vung Tau to Saigon. The Australian force was to be part of the US II (Two) Field Force Vietnam which was headquartered at Long Binh in the adjoining Bien Hoa Province, and whose responsibility was the whole of the Vietnamese III (Three) Corps.⁹

Preparing for the Australian Arrival

In April 1966 Westmoreland sent elements of the 1st Infantry Division, accompanied by the Australian First Battalion, into Phuoc Tuy on Operation ABILENE. It was not a resounding success as only light contacts were made for most of the operation. The main force units of the Viet Cong (VC) 9 and 5 Divisions were out of the province when the operation was launched and only started moving back as it finished. The only major action of the operation was the attack on a United States unit on the night of 11-12 April. The VC 800 Battalion of the 274 Regiment launched three attacks on a United States position in an attempt to overrun the perimeter, but were repulsed each time with the help of heavy artillery barrages that pounded 1086 rounds into the area during the night. The casualty figures are indicative of the overall tempo of ABILENE. During the 16 day operation United States casualties were 39 killed, 97 wounded, none missing. The action during the night of 11-12

April resulted in 34 killed and 72 wounded, leaving casualties for the rest of the force and the operation at five killed and 25 wounded. VC casualties for the operation were 67 KIA and five captured.¹⁰

In May Westmoreland sent the 173rd to Phuoc Tuy on Operation HARDIHOOD to clear the area prior to the Australian arrival. When the Australian Fifth Battalion arrived in the area the 173rd then went south on Operation HOLLANDIA, into the paddy area of Long My, and carried out their first night airborne landing. HOLLANDIA was not a good operation for the 173rd, for although they encountered very little opposition their casualties were relatively high: nine killed and 68 wounded, mainly from booby traps, against four VC killed, by body count, four possible and four captured.¹¹ Summing up, the "Commander's Analysis" noted: "It is unlikely that the VC elements in the area constitute a single force of greater than company strength".¹²

The Australians at Nui Dat, Phuoc Tuy Province

By 14 June 1966 the Fifth and Sixth Battalions of the Royal Australian Regiment, plus supporting units and Task Force Headquarters, had arrived at the Nui Dat base. The base was to cover a large area of over two square kilometres of mainly rubber plantation and included the small hill, Nui Dat. Highway 2 on the western edge of the base was closed to the local people except at designated periods. The layout of the area created many defensive problems, chiefly because of the large unmanned gap along the western side. Brigadier Jackson, the new Task Force commander, thought he could fill this gap with a third battalion, but it was to be another 18 months before a third battalion arrived. Jackson's rationale for taking such a large area was that it provided the units with room to fight should the base ever be attacked. Although it gave room to fight, the large area created enormous problems from its inception because of the number of troops required to secure the perimeter, effectively cutting down on operational capability.

With the perimeters established the Task Force was then faced with the formidable job of trying to build the area into a defensive position, as well as attempting to mount operations. One of the key elements of the Australian strategy was to create a buffer zone or "cordon sanitaire" around the base out to 4000 metres (just over two-and-a-half miles), except for the southern end where the large village of Hoa Long was located at a distance of less than 1000 metres (about two-thirds of a mile) from the perimeter. This buffer zone was to be kept clear of civilians and to be dominated by saturation patrolling, hoping thereby to deny enemy forces intelligence and forming-up areas from which to launch an attack on the base. The rubber plantation was kept intact with a minimum of clearing, and no lights were allowed at night. The open area on the western side was covered by fire from both the high ground of Nui Dat and the armoured personnel carriers (APCs) area which straddled both sides of the road on the southern section. Artillery was

situated at the southern entrance and could bring fire to bear on most of the perimeter. The base was declared off limits to all civilians in the area. Local leave close to the base was prohibited; any leave was to be taken in the port city of Vung Tau, 30 kilometres (18 miles) to the south, where a large Australian logistic base was set up and from which supplies for Nui Dat were transported by road, with a contingency plan for aerial resupply if required.

From the military perspective the plan was quite sound. Unfortunately in the Vietnamese context it was full of contradictions, and placed the Australian force not only in conflict with the local population but also with General Westmoreland.

The Australians and the Local People

Contrary to what the Australian military historian and then Intelligence Officer with 5RAR, Robert O'Neill, has written, the positioning of the Australian base did not take into consideration the needs of the local population.¹³ There was considerable dislocation of both the economic and social structure of the province because of the establishment of the base, which in turn created considerable animosity toward the Australians from the beginning.

The United States and Australian forces' major problem during their Vietnam intervention was the calibre of the government they were there to assist. Australian Army publications had made the point in a study of counter-revolutionary warfare that the first requirement for success was a competent civilian government.¹⁴ It would be impossible, under any criteria, to call the governments of South Vietnam since 1954 competent, especially that of mid-1966 when the "Struggle Movement" had President Ky more concerned with fighting his own generals than the VC. Because the central government was largely corrupt and incompetent, the governmental support required to consolidate military actions was not in place. Therefore the policies of creating clear areas and resettling population that worked for Robert Thompson in Malaya, where the British were the government *and* the army, had no validity in Vietnam. Thompson's methods of clear areas and resettlement were not viable options for the Australian and United States forces in Vietnam, as neither the governmental backup required for relief of hardship following resettlement, nor the political will to show that the military policies had some legitimate rationale existed.

When the Australians arrived in Phuoc Tuy they established the base camp at Nui Dat adjacent to a densely populated area. To achieve the aim of the 4000 metre buffer zone required the movement of 8000 people, almost ten per cent of the province population. Inside the 4000 metre buffer zone (excluding Hoa Long) were two villages, Long Phuoc and Long Tan, with a population together of approximately 4000 people. In addition to this there were the many people living on small plots of land inside the area. All of these small landholders were forcibly moved from

their homes and told to relocate in the nearby towns. This movement of the population has been described by all military writers of the period so far as a "resettlement", a highly ambiguous usage since it implies that the people were helped. This was not the case in Phuoc Tuy in 1966.

The village of Hoa Long, although inside the 4000 metre area, was allowed to remain, but the villages of Long Tan (approximately 1000 people) and Long Phuoc (approximately 3000 people) were evacuated and subsequently destroyed. The people from Long Tan had been forced from their village by ARVN forces, assisted by United States troops, during ABILENE in April, and the people of Long Phuoc by the 173rd Brigade in May. The people of Long Tan were forced into the towns of Dat Do and Long Dien, while those from Long Phuoc were moved to Hoa Long, Long Dien, and some to Dat Do. This relocation, it was presumed, made the task of population control easier since the people were concentrated in villages under some semblance of ARVN control. Once moved these people were then forgotten by the Australian forces and received no help in the re-establishment of their homes or modes of life.¹⁵

It would be naive to suggest that these people were not an Australian responsibility on the grounds that it was not the Australians who actually forced them from their areas. The plan for the Australian base was well in place before ABILENE and the displacement of the population of Long Tan. When the United States forces left, the people tried to return to their homes but were forbidden by the implementation of Australian policy. Their village was then destroyed by a combination of artillery and neglect. With their only source of income denied them they became beggars, exploited labour, or at best poor relations for those lucky enough to have relatives in Dat Do or Long Dien. The inhabitants of Long Phuoc received worse treatment. Where the Long Tan villagers had time to take many of their possessions, the Long Phuoc villagers had been shifted from their village during the 173rd Brigade's operation in May 1966, but only so that the brigade could operate through the village. They were not evacuated to become refugees. The 173rd "After Action" report from HARDIHOOD states: "Refugees 0". When the Australians continued HARDIHOOD they first closed the area and then in late June proceeded to destroy the village. This was a house-by-house destruction of substantial structures made of brick, dressed timber and tiles. Australian records state that 537 dwellings were destroyed. Dwellings were physically pulled down and all the villagers' possessions burnt. These included cooking and eating utensils, bedding, clothing, school books, photographs, family ornaments and farming implements. The fields, fruit trees and gardens were defoliated, remaining off-limits until September when the people were allowed back to work their ground for only two days a week under strict curfew conditions. There is no record of how these people survived the initial move, but the Task Force Civil Affairs officer states that he knew that some of the people from Long Phuoc went into Hoa Long, and that: "There was no work for them and

they were just hanging around Hoa Long. They weren't starving but they were pretty bloody hungry and they were dirt poor . . . I cried tears for them, believe you me."¹⁶

As the Task Force was short of infantry, drastic measures were initiated in order to keep the civilians away from the closed areas. One of these measures was the deliberate firing of artillery onto local people who were seen going into the areas. Messages from the Task Force signal log (Table 1) show that there was a disregard for the safety of the civilian population in order to enforce policy. Although the messages cited below are for September 1966, there are many similar instances throughout the records for 1966 and 1967.

It would be possible to excuse this policy if there had been no need for the people to go back to their old areas, but the people had no option; they had to return in order to survive because no help was given to them. If cattle strayed they would naturally have gone back to their old areas. Therefore the people had to retrieve them. If they did, they ran the

Table 1 ¹⁷

Serial	Date	Time	From	Message
48	12	0730	AVN	Two buildings under construction in Long Tan 488659.489657. Arty [artillery] to fire some rounds.
111	13	1105	ALO	3 people at Long Phuoc heading north on trail 50 metres from road. They are carrying baskets on poles. G[round] R[eference] 452651. Arty engaged. Smoke followed by H[igh]E[xplosive].
113	13	1120	ALO	3 cattle 461659 North of road, west of river between Long Tan and Long Phuoc. 470654 people (2) working fields. Engaged by artillery.
114	13	1132	ALO	Herd of cattle at 465653. Engaged by artillery.
789	25	1242	ALO	Numerous people in Long Phuoc on main road travelling both east and west. Engaged by artillery.
923	28	1209	ALO	People walking east into Long Phuoc YS 438639. 15 cattle and one man at 469654. 8 people/cattle south of Long Tan 485652 moving north. Remarks. Arty engaged.

[ALO stands for Air Liaison Officer, which was the small army spotter plane that flew over the area reporting movements.]

risk of being killed; if they did not then it was almost certain that their cattle would be killed, and their last remaining possessions lost.

Although the forced relocation of civilians and the creation of “free fire” zones became an accepted procedure for all Free World Forces in Vietnam, it was in direct contravention of policies laid down by the Australian Army in 1965. *The Division In Battle* pamphlet states:

The principles of humanity prohibit the use of any degree of violence not actually necessary for the purpose of the war. War is not an excuse for ignoring established humanitarian principles. To a large extent these principles have been given concrete form in the law of war; but because all of these principles have not become legal rules, a military commander should consider whether a proposed course of action would be inhumane even though not prohibited by international law.¹⁸

“Principles of humanity” were ignored with respect to the 8000 people who had once resided and earned their living in the area taken over by the Australians, and a “degree of violence not actually necessary for the purpose of the war”, was inflicted on them. The relocation and the subsequent abandonment of responsibility for the 8000 people affected by the positioning of the Task Force, in addition to the policy of dumping VC bodies in town market squares or dragging them behind APCs in sight of the village children, both methods supposedly meant to draw out further VC sympathisers, did nothing to help the Australian, United States or South Vietnamese cause in Phuoc Tuy. Attempts at civic action, such as building school rooms, a Boy Scout hall, or a new market, none of which the people wanted, were not enough to overcome the animosity caused by the destruction of homes and livelihoods. Further, with the implementation of later policies of arresting ARVN draft dodgers, the continual “cordon-and-search” of villages, the arrest and handing over to South Vietnamese authorities of VC “suspects”, who were then badly treated and confined sometimes for months, it is easy to understand why Hoa Long, situated less than 1000 metres from the front gate of the Australian base, was never considered pacified. Hoa Long remained a village of women, children and old men and offered resistance for the whole period of the Australian presence. In 1971, five years after the Australians moved to Phuoc Tuy in May 1966, it was recorded that in Hoa Long:

Security is only a little better [than 1966] and far from satisfactory, due to the still predominant anti-GVN [Government of Vietnam] feeling . . . Agent reports from Hoa long indicate that there is some form of VC activity inside the hamlet every night.¹⁹

The policies adopted by the Australians in 1966 alienated them from the very people from whom they needed support if the war was ever to be brought to the conclusion which the United States and Australia

desired. The VC could not survive without the help of the people, and yet through their first actions in Phuoc Tuy the Australian Task Force had alienated almost ten per cent of the population. It is certain that those who may have been neutral before the Australians arrived did not remain so after the treatment afforded them.

Australian Military Policies

According to Brigadier Jackson, the first Task Force commander, Westmoreland's orders to him were to, "take over Phuoc Tuy. Those were the only tactical orders I had from anyone."²⁰ From the evidence available it would seem that the General Westmoreland's idea of "take over Phuoc Tuy" was very different from Brigadier Jackson's. The latter's plan was to move into the area of Nui Dat, establish a large fortified camp adjacent to the main population centres and show the local population and the VC that the Australians were there to stay. The original intention was to establish the base and slowly expand the area of control, disrupting VC bases and lines of communications and eventually cutting off the VC from the population in short "pacification".

The problem with this concept was that it was not United States policy at that time. It is not an aim of this article to attempt to analyze which policy would have been the more appropriate or successful in relation to the Vietnam conflict. Rather, since the Australians were part of an American Field Force the wishes of the senior American commander in the theatre would have to have been taken into account. General Westmoreland's policy in 1966 was for United States and Free World Forces to be "manoeuvre battalions", which were to engage and kill enemy "main force" units while the ARVN together with United States advisors carried out the pacification and nation-building roles. He did not envisage that Free World Forces would be involved in pacification: "COMUSMACV's [General Westmoreland] instructions to his commanders were to 'undertake operations which will find, fix and destroy Viet Cong (VC) forces by sustained and aggressive actions'."²¹

This difference in interpretation of role is apparent when one considers, first, that the Australians established their base adjacent to the populated centres, but had no authority in those areas, since they were the responsibility of the Vietnamese province chief and his United States advisers, and second, that Australian forces could not mount operations which penetrated the populated areas without the permission of the province chief.

Whatever Westmoreland's interpretation of the role, it is doubtful that the Australian Government would have been prepared to accept the political costs which a more offensive strategy and possibly higher casualties would have entailed. Consideration must also be given to the operational reality that the Australians did not have the capacity to work to Westmoreland's concept because of the lack of both front line troops and available equipment. Because the perimeter of the base covered such a large area, a full battalion was required to man it, but even this

was not really adequate at that time because there was little barbed wire available and no weapon pits had been dug. Spare parts for APCs and personal weapons for troops were at a minimum, and when some patrols went out there were not enough machine guns remaining within the perimeter for adequate base defence. In addition relations between the Royal Australian Air Force and the Army were strained and command problems took several months to be resolved, all of which added to base defence inadequacies.

Rather than being used to mount extensive offensive operations against main force VC units, the first four months of the Australian force's time were taken up by a continual battle against the elements during the wet season, a battle aggravated by supply shortages and inter-service rivalries. Despite this, the patrols and close operations were almost continuous with one battalion out while the other manned the base. The battalion manning the base was not confined to a static role but had fighting patrols and ambushes constantly on the move. The building of the base progressed virtually by hand labour, meaning that troops received no rest between operations. Brigadier Jackson, the Task Force Commander, wrote in August that "the pace of operations is beginning to tell and there are indications that the infantry are becoming very fatigued both physically and mentally . . . Recreational facilities are inadequate".²²

The continual patrolling, the "cordon-and-search" of villages, and the operations into suspected enemy base areas continued for the rest of the year. However, this was only local activity, as the Australians went no further than 30 kilometres (18 miles) from the base. Although VC base areas and lines of communications were disrupted, only small groups of enemy were encountered, except for two clashes that were enemy initiated. During December the Task Force was called upon by II Field Force Vietnam to participate in Operation DUCK as security for part of Highway 15, while the 9th Infantry Division moved from the port of Vung Tau to Long Thanh (Bear Cat). In view of the fact that the security of Highway 15 was one of the specific roles Westmoreland had envisaged for the Australians it seems strange that Brigadier Jackson should describe operations to secure it as "flashes in the pan".²³ He recorded later that "our ability to conduct offensive operations against the VC in December was severely limited by road security operations."²⁴

There were only two major actions involving the Australian force during 1966, and both were enemy initiated. The first was in July during Operation HOBART, when the Australian Sixth Battalion encountered elements of the local force D445 Battalion, which attacked and almost over-ran one of the Australian companies, "hugging" to avoid the artillery fire. The VC unit engaged the Australian company for over an hour despite the heavy artillery barrage brought down amongst them. VC losses for the action were six killed by body count, while the Australians lost two dead and 12 wounded. Several other small clashes occurred

during the five day operation and the final casualties were nine VC by body count, with Australian casualties at three dead and 19 wounded.

The other major action occurred in August when a company patrol of Sixth Battalion walked into a major VC ambush in a rubber plantation near the deserted village of Long Tan, only 2,500 metres (less than two miles) from the Task Force base. Nui Dat base had been mortared in the early hours of 17 August and B Company, Sixth Battalion, had been sent out at first light to investigate. D Company was sent to relieve them on the following day. On meeting and relieving B company, D company moved into the Long Tan rubber plantation and 30 minutes later, as they moved toward the eastern side of the plantation, the ambush was initiated. One Australian platoon (30 men) was cut off, but the ensuing constant movement of the rest of the company over a wide area of the plantation while trying to relieve this platoon proved one of the factors that saved the Australians. Others may have been the weather and sustained supporting fire; visibility was cut to 100 metres by fierce rain storms and artillery pounded into the enemy positions. D company was finally relieved after a tense four hour battle, when an Australian relief force of APC mounted infantry firing heavy machine guns moved into the plantation in the dark.

An official body count of 245 VC has been recorded, but Socialist Republic of Vietnam authorities refute this count and say around 150 were killed, and those mainly due to artillery.²⁵ The Australian losses were 18 killed and 26 wounded. Vietnamese sources say that the action was initiated both to stop the Australian policy of destruction in the province and to show support for the people of the displaced villages of Long Phuoc and Long Tan.²⁶

The battle brought home to the Australians that the war was more than a counter-insurgency conflict. Major re-organization was initiated, from senior command down to re-assessing the ammunition "states" for infantry riflemen. Ammunition "states" had previously been 60 rounds of rifle ammunition per rifleman and 200 rounds per machine gun, inadequate levels of supply in circumstances such as the extensive contact at Long Tan; this fact alone gives an indication of the Australian knowledge and perception of the situation in Vietnam. The major impact of Long Tan was the realization that battalion operations would, from then on, have to function in tighter formations, meaning that operations of battalion size would cover even smaller areas than previously and could moreover never move outside artillery range. Command of APCs was given "unequivocally" to the infantry commander and a "ready reaction company" was always to be on hand in the Task Force area, tying up even more troops in static situations. For the rest of the year the Australians continued to work slowly outwards from the base at Nui Dat, but did not make contact with other than small local force units.

The year 1966 ended with the Australians committing themselves to the development of a larger base camp which required a greater number of troops to man, so cutting down on operational efficiency. Not

surprisingly the operations undertaken by the Australians following this expansionary move were not of the kind Westmoreland had envisaged; Australians were not confronting main force units in their base areas and sanctuaries, but conducting pacification operations within their own Tactical Area of Responsibility (TAOR). In February 1967 Westmoreland visited the Australian Task Force in Phuoc Tuy and confronted the Australian commanders about what he considered the poor results achieved by the force:

I then departed for the Australian Task Force where I called on Brigadier Graham, the new commander, for the first time. The Australians are very inactive and I learned they are about to rotate their two battalions which means they will be virtually ineffective for over a month. Out of a 4,600 man force they are able to put only six companies into the field. They have a large base to defend which requires two companies [at least]. I expressed to Brigadier Graham my disappointment and subsequently in talking to the Australian Ambassador, to General Mackay upon his departure, and to General Vincent upon his arrival, I expressed my concern that very little combat power was being generated by the 4,600 man force. Furthermore, I suggested that they might want to change their unit rotation policy which I thought would allow them to increase their combat power with the same total number of troops and at the same time have them in a fighting posture for twelve months. The Australians were a little shocked at my comments but I explained in all fairness to the command and to their reputation, this observation should be known.²⁷

Several months later this difference in interpretation of role between the American and Australian commands was noted again.

Military operations are not evaluated though it should be noted that the Australians have been extremely effective in securing an area through intensive day and night operations within their TAOR [Tactical Area Of Responsibility] . . . However, the primary mission of the Australian Force is to carry out offensive operations against the enemy, rather than engage in territorial pacification missions.²⁸

Despite these criticisms from the senior command of which they were a part, the Australians remained within the confines of Phuoc Tuy until January 1968. There were only two major actions in 1967, and again these were enemy initiated.

Conclusions

When Australia committed forces to South Vietnam in 1962 the military aim was motivated by the self-interested political hope of securing a United States presence in southeast Asia. During the period of the involvement the rationale remained the same. South Vietnam and

its people were only important to Australia as appendages of the United States. Policy decisions of the Australian Army were tied more to national political need than overall strategic thought and were ad hoc in nature. The Australians had to make decisions in haste in order to keep pace with the rapid American escalation. The true nature of the war could not be addressed because this was contrary to the supposed rationale for being involved. Australian soldiers and the public were told that the people of South Vietnam wanted to be protected from the forces of the revolutionary movement; this in fact was far from the case. Many families in the south had members fighting with, or supporting, the Viet Cong, especially in the countryside where there was little loyalty to the government in Saigon. Therefore the policy decisions which reflected the belief that the people wanted and appreciated the allied presence were doomed to failure because in practice they were not based upon a realistic analysis of the situation.

The decisions taken on the location and size of the base at Nui Dat are examples of this faulty analysis. The Nui Dat base locked the Australian force into a position from which it was impossible to move in the following years of involvement. The support of a large proportion of the province's population was lost in 1966 and was never won back. The forced movement of 8000 people and the destruction of their homes and livelihoods without any attempt at compensation by the Australians or the Government of South Vietnam permanently alienated a large proportion of the province population. The support of the people for their own government and its allies was essential if the conflict was ever to achieve the conclusion desired by that government, the United States and Australia alike, yet the first actions of the Australians in Phuoc Tuy had the opposite effect. Later actions, such as the dumping of bodies in the market squares, the prohibitions on land use and the arresting and handing over to the South Vietnamese of ARVN draft dodgers, increased the animosity toward the Australian presence.

The size and complexity of the base and the waste of manpower its defence entailed were givens that later Task Force commanders had no option but to accept. The base restricted the mobility of combat forces and the overall combat ability of the Australian effort by tying up men and equipment in static defence roles. The cost of the Australian effort could have been cut in half and better results achieved in line with COMUSMACV's policies by placing the battalions and supporting arms in the base complex of the Logistic Support Base at Vung Tau. The battalions would then have been free to move on operations into any part of the eastern section of III Corps without having to be concerned for the security of an exposed rear area. They would have been able to fit more easily into General Westmoreland's concept of "manoeuvre battalions" and perhaps have played a distinctive role in II Field Force combat operations that were mounting in intensity during 1966.

¹ In 1965-1966 these questions had not been put to the electorate, although successive Morgan-Gallup polls in the early days of the Vietnam involvement did show general public support. Later elections in which the Liberal Party (conservative) was returned to government demonstrated a voter-based mandate for continuing involvement.

² Lieutenant-General Stanley Robert Larsen & Brigadier-General James Lawton Collins, Jr. *Allied Participation In Vietnam*, Department of the Army, Washington D.C., 1975, pp. 89-90.

³ *Westmoreland Papers*, National Archives, Washington D.C., Record Group 319, Box 28.

⁴ *The Bulletin*, 12 November 1966, p. 15.

⁵ Brigadier David Jackson. *Interview*, 29 January 1988.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ General Alan Stretton. *Interview*, 16 January 1988.

⁹ *Command History United States Military Assistance Command Vietnam 1966*, National Archives, Washington D.C., Record Group 472, p. 93.

¹⁰ *Combat After Action Report, Operation Abilene*, Record Group 472, National Archives, Washington D.C., pp. 1-68.

¹¹ *Combat After Action Report, Operation Hollandia*, National Archives, Washington D.C., Record Group 472, p. 22.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 24

¹³ Robert O'Neill. *Vietnam Task. The 5th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, 1966-67*, Cassell Australia Ltd., Melbourne, 1968, p. 30.

¹⁴ *The Division in Battle*, Pamphlet No 11, *Counter Revolutionary Warfare 1965*, Military Board, Canberra 1965, p. 73.

¹⁵ Jackson. *Interview*.

¹⁶ Major John Donohoe (Civil Affairs Officer, Australian Task Force, July 1966-May 1967). *Interview*, 30 June 1988.

¹⁷ *Australian War Memorial 181 : "Herbicide Series"*, Message Forms, Commander's Diaries, 1-30 September 1966, Box 2. Hereafter references to the above will be cited as *AWM 181*.

¹⁸ *The Division In Battle*, pamphlet, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

¹⁹ *AWM 181*. Headquarters First Australian Task Force, Item "Province Survey Phuoc Tuy Province", Hoa Long Ground Team Report, 13-17 April 1971, pp. 1-5.

²⁰ Jackson. *Interview*.

²¹ *Command History United States Military Assistance Command Vietnam 1966*, National Archives, Washington D.C., Record Group 472, pp. 1-2.

²² *AWM 181*. Commander's Diaries, 1-31 August 1966.

²³ Jackson. *Interview*.

²⁴ *AWM 181*, *op.cit.*, Commander's Diaries, 1-31 January 1967.

²⁵ Senior Colonel (ret) Nguyen Thanh Hong. *Interview*, Bien Hoa City, Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 10 November 1987. Hong was in charge of VC forces at the battle.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Westmoreland Personal Papers, 1962-1972*, Record Group 319, Box 29, National Archives, Washington D.C., unpaginated.

²⁸ *Evaluation Report, Australian Task Force - Phuoc Tuy*, August 1967, Records of the United States Military Assistance Command Vietnam, Free World Military Force Advisor, Command Reporting Files, 1966, 334-77-0069, "Australia - Misc. Correspondence", Record Group 334, National Archives, Washington D.C., unpaginated.

Veterans in Australia: the Search for Integration

Jane Ross

Australia and the war

Vietnam was not what its veterans wanted it to have been. It was unsuccessful—more so than most of them seem to admit—and it was unpopular—though not so unpopular in Australia as most of them now believe after viewing the war through American mass media.

The Vietnam war continued the theme of dependency in Australia's foreign policy,¹ but with a different cultural outcome. After the First World War, which impacted so hugely on Australians at a personal level² (because of the number of men who fought in Europe and the Middle East), the military experiences were used to form the basis of an independent, national identity myth, known variously as the myth or tradition of Anzac or the myth of the diggers.³ The Second World War saw the country's dependence shift from Britain to the United States, but still the national identity remained robustly intact.

After Vietnam, however, different cultural processes were at work. Because Vietnam was not comparable to our earlier wars it did not fit immediately into the military tradition; more importantly, the enormous impact on our culture of American media and the rapid adaptation of American ideas by our veterans meant that Australian representations of the war were largely based on American memories and interpretations.⁴ We can see this most clearly in the two issues which have played a central role in defining "the" Australian veteran: Agent Orange, and the problem of homecoming and the need for a welcome home march.

The 50,000 or so veterans deal with their memories of the war in many different ways.⁵ For some, the full-time veterans, it is the defining element of their identity. Some are damaged beyond cure either physically or mentally, while others lead productive lives untroubled by their experiences. For some, the war is with them constantly, while others left it behind when they boarded the plane or ship for their return to Australia.

It is difficult to say to what extent "the veterans" do indeed form any sort of coherent group; and it is also difficult even as late as the end of 1990 to see whether the experiences of Vietnam have stabilised into coherent cultural forms. It does seem, however, that both the Vietnam veterans as a whole and their memories are being absorbed progressively into the mainstream community of returned servicemen and into its official ideology, the Anzac tradition. In this sense, the war is at last being Australianised.

The Vietnam war has proven difficult to integrate because the war impinged very little on so many Australians, and never made very much sense. It is hard to remember why we, as a nation, did so casually, thoughtlessly and irresponsibly condemn so many young men to the possibility of death or irretrievable damage. There was opposition to the war in Australia, but the experience of serving in the Australian forces was *not* a radicalising one. There was never any organised opposition within the army, and the soldiers prided themselves on their professionalism which meant that they consciously did not concern themselves with the politics or morality of their country's commitment to the American cause. There were no organised "veterans against the war" either, and even the Vietnam Veterans' Association of Australia (VVAA), which is oppositional on many matters, is rousing conservative when it comes to the big questions about the war.⁶ The soldiers were, in fact, very much representatives of mainstream Australia.

The opposition to the war—and it did grow over the course of the war—had two strands. The more radical branch was opposed to the war itself, or to Australia's part in it. The other branch had deep historical antecedents; Australia was acutely divided during the First World War over the question of conscription (which was finally rejected, leaving the Australians in that war the only wholly volunteer force), and this aspect of the commitment to Vietnam was the one which raised the most doubts in the general community.

However, despite opposition from some sections of the community, many were in favour of compulsory military service and many of those conscripted were not particularly opposed to doing their two years. Once they were in, and had been trained, then a tour of Vietnam seemed the obvious next step. The army claimed at various times that only those conscripts who volunteered for service in Vietnam were actually posted there, and it does seem as though there would have been no shortage of those willing to go.

The Agent Orange issue in Australia ⁷

The story of Agent Orange will be familiar to readers in the United States who have followed the course of the dispute in their country. Indeed, without the actions of American veterans it seems doubtful whether it would ever have become an issue in Australia, and the Australian case has been very derivative of the American one. Until it became an issue in the United States, no Australian claims for chemical damage had been filed: even since then, there have been only a handful.

The chemical issue only came to the fore in Australia in the late 1970s. The Australian Government at first stupidly denied that any Australian soldiers had ever been exposed. The claim was speedily retracted, being patently false, but the Government then insisted that established veterans' channels could handle the problem, if indeed there was one. But the VVAA refused to accept this, continued to lobby, and instead of using the established channels such as the lobbying power of

the Returned Services League (RSL), relied on media pressure and its own direct contacts with politicians and bureaucrats.

The VVAA's efforts met with mixed success. When it demanded a judicial rather than scientific enquiry the Government referred the matter to the Senate Standing Committee on Science and the Environment which produced *Pesticides and the Health of Australian Vietnam Veterans*, 1982, and promised a comprehensive study into the health of veterans and their offspring. This study—the so-called morbidity survey—unfortunately never eventuated. The other studies which were completed were not accepted as valid by the VVAA (presumably because they all used sample survey techniques rather than investigating the entire population of veterans) and it continued to push for a Royal Commission, the only body felt to have sufficiently wide powers of enquiry and criteria of assessment, and which would remain independent of government opinion and/or policy.

The Royal Commission was established under Justice Philip Evatt in 1983; the report in nine volumes was finally presented in July 1985, after hearing evidence from many veterans and experts. The release of the report did little, at least immediately, to defuse the issue. The Commission functioned, in effect, as a trial of Agent Orange. The counsel "for" the chemicals was briefed by various chemical companies such as Monsanto; the case "against", and therefore "for" the veterans, was argued by the VVAA. The case against Agent Orange was found to be not proven; that is, the chemicals were presumed innocent unless proven guilty, and the Royal Commissioner announced his verdict in extravagant language:

So Agent Orange is Not Guilty and the chemical agents used to defoliate battle zones in Vietnam and to protect Australians from malaria are not to blame.

No one lost.

This is not a matter for regret but for rejoicing. Veterans and their wives are no more at risk of having abnormal offspring than anyone else. Veterans have not been poisoned. The number with general health problems is small, probably much smaller than amongst their peers in the community. The few that have psychological stress disorders can seek help freely and without shame and above all with hope of early relief and in the sure knowledge that no poisoning of their minds has occurred.

This is good news and it is the Commission's fervent hope that it will be shouted from the roof-tops.⁸

The Commissioner's hopes that this would be the end of the matter were short-lived. Many veterans—and other observers—were concerned with certain aspects of the Commission, even if they did not necessarily dispute the overall tenor of the findings. The VVAA was angry with the Commission. They had urged that it be formed, and had been confident that the findings would confirm their worst fears. Instead, they found

themselves in the position of being the prosecutors, with the onus of proof lying on them to show three things and thus prove Agent Orange guilty.

They needed to show: first, that there were in fact health problems; second, that those suffering from these problems had been exposed in some way to herbicides; and third, that it was this exposure which had caused the individual's problems. The Commission found that while the first, the existence of health problems, had been demonstrated, it denied both sufficient exposure to and connection between herbicides and ill-health. Rather it attributed health problems to widespread Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and to increased alcohol and cigarette use, and it hinted at a possible carcinogenic effect of the anti-malarial drug Daosone: "Any Vietnam veteran suffering from cancer who may have taken daosone should have his claim treated as showing that a reasonable hypothesis exists connecting his incapacity with his war service."⁹

It did allow also that some cancers could be attributed to chemical exposure, with the following cautious statement:

(The Commission) regards the suggestion of Soft Tissue Sarcoma and Lymphoma (non-Hodgkins) induction by exposure to TCDD in 2,4,5-T (in Agent Orange) as unlikely but not fanciful. A Determining Authority might well be reasonably satisfied that a reasonable hypothesis linking incapacity following such inductions with service in Vietnam exists.¹⁰

The VVAA's case was weak in many respects, and certainly not equal to the task of proving beyond reasonable doubt that the chemicals were guilty. This is at present an impossible task, given that scientists themselves are in dispute. And it is not to say that the chemicals were guilty, nor that the chemicals are innocent—because this is not proven either—but merely that an open finding would have been the more correct one. The Commissioner has continued to defend his approach, emphasising that his findings have enabled many veterans to think positive and "get on with their lives", free from concerns about their future health and that of their children.

The failure of the VVAA's case reinforced their view that they could never be allowed to succeed because of the social, economic and political ramifications of any findings against widely-used chemicals. We can question why some veterans seem to be intent on proving the guilt of Agent Orange almost to the point of obsession, when the Commission's findings mean that most claims will be allowed by the repatriation system on grounds other than the toxicity of chemicals. The answer would seem to be that being able to blame a chemical, or some specific agent rather than "just the war" is important to their self-esteem, and the diagnosis of PTSD seems to bear with it a stigma of personal inadequacy.

Reports in the Australian press in March-May of 1990 claim that recent events in the US have given "fresh hope" to veterans in Australia. This refers both to the 1987 judgement in Illinois which awarded damages against Monsanto, and cast doubt on one of the pro-Agent Orange experts, Dr. Suskind, and also to favourable reports prepared by the Independent Agent Orange Task Force which link Agent Orange to various cancers and other diseases. Justice Evatt for his part is described as being "firm on Agent Orange",¹¹ even though the press seem to consider that the Commission's findings have been thrown into doubt. Similarly, a case heard on appeal in the Repatriation System in 1990 was hailed by the VVAA as a "landmark" because it awarded a widow's pension on the basis that a soft-tissue sarcoma (schwannoma) could reasonably be linked to chemical exposure in Vietnam.¹² As workers in the area are quick to point out, however, this is only one case which may itself be appealed to a higher level; and soft-tissue sarcomas (a very rare form of cancer) were mentioned by the Royal Commission as being a reasonable claim anyway.

Even findings which do not provide overall support for the VVAA's case are reported in a misleading way, for example, in the treatment of reports by the CDC claiming that US troops who served in Vietnam have not developed physical problems different from those of veterans who served elsewhere in the world at the same time, except that they were at increased risk of non-Hodgkins lymphoma. Under the heading "Compo [compensation] hopes for Vietnam veterans", an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* opens by claiming that:

Compensation amounting to millions of dollars could flow to a number of Vietnam veterans and widows of veterans following publication in America of findings into the effects of exposure to the defoliant Agent Orange.¹³

Like many of the arguments about Vietnam, the Agent Orange controversy was initiated in the US but then prosecuted with considerable vigour and sincerity by the veterans who formed the VVAA, and yet even ten years later we still await a definitive answer. The Commission may have achieved its objective of reassuring veterans about their health, at least partially, but there is no guarantee that this will be an enduring achievement. The final verdict on Agent Orange is still to come.

The Health of Veterans I—Physical Health

The Agent Orange campaign was based on the assumption that veterans of the Vietnam war, and their children, suffered ill-health as a result of exposure to chemicals during their Vietnam service. But as the Royal Commission concluded, there is, so far, no evidence of large-scale health problems among Vietnam veterans. One can conclude from this, optimistically, as did the Royal Commission that there *are*, in fact, no special health problems; or, one can leave it as an open question.

Large numbers of veterans have taken advantage of the Repatriation system of pensions for disabilities. But most of these are, so far, for minor disabilities and the amount of pension involved is very small (see Table 1). As the veterans age, however, one would expect them to move to higher pension levels.

The VVAA and other believers in the chemical issue have supplied anecdotal evidence of both physical and mental ill-health among veterans, and of a high incidence of birth abnormalities among their children conceived after service in Vietnam. The sorts of symptoms which have been reported by those believing they have suffered from chemical damage cover a wide range. The VVAA published what they called an "Agent Orange Questionnaire of possible allergic symptoms" in their journal *Debrief* of October 1982, providing a ready made check-list of symptoms. Without attributing specific agency it seems more than coincidental that following the publication of this list there was an increase in the number of patients presenting to the Repatriation Hospitals with just these symptoms. Every system in the body was represented in the list, under headings of skin, ENT, eyes, respiratory, cardiovascular, gastrointestinal, gastro-urinary, muscular, and nervous system. The list is so comprehensive it covers almost every "symptom" that any person, sick or well, could possibly exhibit.

None of these claims about widespread and unusual ill-health has been substantiated in any large-scale studies.

Table 1
Rates of Disability Pensions for Vietnam Veterans at June 1989

Number of veterans	% of general rate pension received	Cumulative % of total	\$ per week
2564	10	30	7.46
1762	15-20	51	14.92
1075	25-30	64	22.38
803	35-40	73	29.84
574	45-50	80	37.30
498	60	86	44.76
281	65-70	89	52.22
333	75-80	93	59.68
122	85-90	95	67.14
448	100	100	74.60
8460			
36	intermediate rate		136.25
678	TPI (totally & permanently)		197.90
9174			

Nevertheless the VVAA persuaded the Government to undertake a series of studies of veterans' health, and as a result the Australian Veterans Health Studies (AVHS) group was set up. It carried out the *Case Control Study of Congenital Anomalies and Vietnam Service*¹⁴ (popularly known as the "Birth Defects Study"), completed in 1983, which found that "there is no evidence that Army service in Vietnam relates to the risk of fathering a child with an anomaly". No subsequent research has invalidated this conclusion, and as the Royal Commission observed, the sad fact is that a normal incidence of birth defects among the children of Vietnam veterans would lead us to expect between three per cent and ten per cent of them to suffer some malformation.

One study undertaken since the Royal Commission has claimed to show a high incidence of various birth defects, as well as of marital instability. However, the sample used was very unrepresentative of the Army, selecting atypical patterns of engagement (whether regular or conscript) and rank; additionally each respondent was asked to choose his own control. The figures on marital breakdown in fact showed a lower than expected rate. Overall the results of the study are at best qualitative rather than quantitative.¹⁵

The second study carried out by the AVHS was a pilot morbidity study, designed to be the precursor to a major study of the health of veterans. The pilot study showed, basically that there was no discernible pattern of ill-health among veterans. In spite of the Royal Commission's strong support for its implementation, the Government refused to give funding for the larger project, and it was finally abandoned.

The third study was, however, completed. Known as *The Mortality Report*,¹⁶ it compared the death-rates of veteran and non-veteran National Servicemen until 1982. The report is a mine of information on the career of the conscript, on both the selection processes which carried him to Vietnam and the structure and function of units in Vietnam. The overall conclusions on mortality (as opposed to morbidity, i.e. ill-health) were: first, that veterans of Vietnam had slightly higher death rates than did non-veterans, mainly because of increased alcohol-related sickness; but that both groups of National Servicemen had lower mortality rates than civilians of the same age group. This was not a new finding. American studies had demonstrated that both Second World War and Korean veterans exhibited the "Healthy Soldier Syndrome". Given the very good health and fitness of the National Servicemen who were selected into the Army, and the more marked fitness of those who were sent to Vietnam, we would expect them to be healthier than the average citizen years later, and therefore to have lower mortality rates—unless of course their service in Vietnam had caused some widespread deterioration in their health. The study did not conclude that Vietnam service had produced no effects on the health of soldiers. But it did conclude that these effects seemed to be related to easy access to, and increased consumption of, those two widely used and harmful drugs of

addiction, nicotine and alcohol. Beer was cheap, available and by far the most common relaxant among Australian forces in Vietnam; cigarettes were supplied in both army ration packs and in RSL and Red Cross "comfort parcels". These two drugs have been accepted by the Repatriation system as being implicated in many pensionable disabilities now suffered by veterans of all wars.

The Health of Veterans II—Mental Health

As with physical health, there has been almost no research in Australia on the mental health of veterans, though there have been studies of veterans undergoing psychiatric treatment. The Royal Commission seemed to find it acceptable to use figures from the USA to estimate the probable levels of stress-induced mental ill-health (summarised as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, known earlier as Vietnam Veterans Syndrome). Yet, one could argue against this on the grounds that both the war and the home front were different for Australian soldiers compared to the US forces. According to evidence accepted by the Royal Commission: 23.5 per cent of veterans would be expected to be complaining of symptoms (mostly of anxiety and depression); 12.2 per cent would have sufficient symptoms to warrant a diagnosis; 5.9 per cent would have chronic conditions; and 3.2 per cent would be incapacitated. Most of these men would, however, be suffering from these symptoms even without having had Vietnam service, as the base male population percentages were respectively 20 per cent, 9.9 per cent, 4.9 per cent, and 2.4 per cent. (These figures given by the Royal Commission are based on a mental health survey carried out on a random sample of adults in a suburb of Sydney—which perhaps would not be completely representative of the general population.)

The Commissioner concluded:

There is a Vietnam veterans' syndrome, broadly corresponding to PTSD. At this time about 25% of Vietnam veterans will have psychological symptoms requiring treatment, and this number may be expected to peak in 1988-89 and then gradually but steadily decline.¹⁷

These figures are in line with the Vietnam Veterans' Counselling Service (VVCS) estimates that perhaps 20 per cent of all veterans are in need of some form of counselling. The confusion over the possible levels of mental ill-health among veterans is understandable. First, measures of mental health in the general population are not noted for their reliability. There is little agreement on how to define mental health or how to measure it. Lay people, for instance, would probably be rather sceptical about the figures cited above showing 20 per cent of the male population to be suffering from "symptoms"; but we should remember that only a much smaller number seek treatment, or find these symptoms disabling. Second, most of the studies specifically on veterans' mental ill-health are

qualitative rather than quantitative. Certainly veterans may show high levels of rage and violence, of guilt and distress because of combat experiences, but this is only evident among the population of those seeking counselling, or of those who are already psychiatric in-patients. These studies do not tell us anything about the other veterans, those who have not sought help. It is assumed that they, like most people, are more or less adjusted; or more or less maladjusted, depending on whether one sees the glass as half-full or half-empty.

All groups if examined would present patterns of physical and mental illness; the question is: do Vietnam veterans have a unique pattern which would lead us to believe that the problems were caused by their war service? To disentangle this, we need well-constructed, relatively large-scale research with adequate controls. Australia has been backward in funding research of this type, compared at least to the United States, and there is currently very little data on which to make judgements.

This has not inhibited organisations such as the VVAA, but it is hard to see them making headway against the findings of the Royal Commission unless some new and high quality research appears which incontrovertibly relates chemicals and veterans' ill health to their experiences as soldiers in Vietnam. A research group at Sydney University has begun a survey study of veterans' physical and mental health using a large sample and control group, but the results of this will not be known for some time, and the ultimate answers to questions about the health and mortality of Vietnam veterans lie somewhere in the future.

Veterans' Services—the Repat system ¹⁸

The Repatriation system was established in Australia during the First World War. In fact the commonly used term "Repat" is misleading, as the series of legislative acts are more concerned with social security than with the return of soldiers to their home country. "Repat" includes disability and service pensions, health services, home loans, workforce retraining, etc. The system has undergone changes over the years, and was most recently revamped in 1986 when the various acts were consolidated into the Veterans Entitlement Act. The system is administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA). At times the DVA has been accused of being unsympathetic and obstructionist towards veterans, which is not surprising given that the Department and veterans are frequently in an adversarial situation, with the veterans trying to show cause for the Department to release funds, and the Department guarding the public monies against what it sees as unfounded claims.

The DVA has been particularly criticised by the VVAA for allegedly having a bad attitude towards Vietnam veterans. The VVAA sees the Department as being somewhat like the RSL—dominated by an older generation who regard veterans of the two World Wars as being the real returned servicemen, and who see the younger Vietnam veterans as

having suffered insufficiently in their "conflict" to merit the full generosity of "the repat".

For some veterans, their contact with the repat system is the most salient aspect of being a veteran. Unfortunately the system is a legalistic maze, with determination of the veteran's eligibility and entitlements sometimes taking years of completing applications, assessments, and enduring appeals. To qualify for a disability pension applicants or their dependants need to show that injury, or disease, or death has been, in general terms, "war caused". The exact definition of what "war caused" means has been subject to change in recent years. Once entitlement to a disability pension has been accepted, the degree of incapacity is then assessed as being somewhere between a minimum 10 per cent and 100 per cent, and a compensatory pension is paid accordingly. A large number of Vietnam veterans—more than 10,000—receive some disability pensions; most of them only receive a small amount, indicating that their disability has been assessed, at least for the present, as being only minor (See Table 1).

For an individual, having his disability accepted as being war-caused is not a final step. The level of pension can be varied over his lifetime and the determining process is very far from static, even when the legislation remains the same. This is because of the system of appeals through which the veteran and the DVA can proceed before a final judgement is given.

The Determining Process

The veteran must first approach the Repatriation Commission with a claim, and may be immediately successful in having it recognised at an acceptable level. If not, he can then appeal, sequentially, to the Veterans' Review Board, the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, the Federal Court, and, finally, the High Court. Sometimes the success or otherwise of the veteran's claim will depend on who is sitting on a Board on a particular day. Changes of interpretation make their way slowly through the whole system, and can have an impact eventually on a large number of claimants. Legal and medical fashions also change. What is considered one year to be a reasonable claim can be disallowed the next; what the veteran has to do is present a case which, in the light of current medical and legal opinion, is based on a "reasonable hypothesis". Prior to legislative changes in 1985, the DVA had to *disprove* the veteran's hypothesis that his disability was war-caused, and so almost all veterans' claims were successful: but since a Federal Court ruling of 1987 argued that veterans must present a "reasonable hypothesis", the veterans now need to make stronger cases. In the words of the Court:

To be reasonable, a hypothesis must possess some degree of acceptability or credibility—it must not be obviously fanciful, impossible, incredible or not tenable or too remote or too

tenuous... At the same time, however, a hypothesis may be reasonable without having been proved . . . to be correct as a matter of fact.¹⁹

This need not be the end of the story, for in a typical contested case the experts from both sides can produce what to them are “plausible hypotheses” on which the determining authority must rule. Some hypotheses are rejected as not being reasonable and others are accepted, even though they may be dealing with contending arguments in an area which is far from being scientifically or medically settled.

That this need for a “plausible hypothesis” is relevant to Agent Orange claims is obvious; but the actual rulings have been somewhat unexpected. In practice the repat system has followed the findings of the Evatt Royal Commission and disallows claims based on exposure to defoliants and insecticides, thus ruling that there are no plausible hypotheses relating any disabilities to chemical exposure. The VVAA, understandably, continues to fight against this ruling, and there are several cases currently in the process of being heard. The other side of the coin, however, is that by following the Royal Commission findings almost all claims based on stress as the war-caused catalyst of disabilities will be allowed, as will those in which smoking and/or alcohol consumption are implicated and where these behaviours are found to be caused or aggravated by war service (as generally seems to be the case).

In spite of the seeming comprehensiveness of the repat benefits, the Vietnam veteran community has continued to lobby for special services. The VVAA achieved a significant victory in 1982 with the establishment of the Vietnam Veterans Counselling Service (VVCS). Modelled on its US counterpart, the service provides a 24 hour, shop-front counselling network for veterans and their families. It has records on over 5000 clients, and reports over 23,000 contacts per year. Counsellors estimate that the 10 per cent of all Vietnam veterans that they have seen to date represents perhaps half the total number who are in need of some counselling. Some of those who contact the VVCS have only minor problems, but a large number have been diagnosed as having PTSD. The service seems to have fulfilled a need, and has the support of all veteran groups, although some would like to see the service broadened to include veterans of all wars. The VVCS is very much a child of its times. It epitomises the anti-psychiatry, non-drug therapeutic fashions of the 1980s; and its success confirms the limits of the highly bureaucratised, establishment medical care which is provided through the repat system.

Speaking for the Veterans ²⁰

After the final, low-key withdrawal of Australian combat troops from Vietnam, the whole episode was publicly forgotten. The men who had fought and returned, and the bereaved families of those who had not

returned, were left to sort out things as best they could. At that time—in the early 1970s—there was no particular concept of “the Vietnam veteran” in Australia. In a newspaper report on the 1970 Anzac Day march, the word “veteran” was still presented in quotation marks. It was only in the following years, as the issue of veterans and especially Agent Orange came to the fore, that this Americanism was widely adopted along with many other concepts and usages from our trans-Pacific allies.

In the early years after the war, there seems to have been no feeling that the soldiers returned from Vietnam constituted a special case. They were eligible to join the RSL, the “natural” spokesman for all returned servicemen; the repatriation system was in place; there was little unemployment; they were fit young men who had only done twelve month’s active service in what was a minor conflict anyway.

To trace the reasons why other groups besides the RSL, especially the VVAA, came into being in the late 1970s, it is necessary to consider: first, the nature of the RSL; and secondly, the impact of the Agent Orange issue.

When the large numbers of Australian servicemen returned from overseas at the end of the First World War, there was competition as to who would legitimately speak for these “returned men”. The winner was the RSL (the initials of its abbreviated title of Returned Servicemen’s League—now de-“sexed”, as it were, to Returned Service’s League), an organisation which has flourished and enjoys direct government access at the highest levels. The RSL has unfortunately strayed beyond its brief to promote the welfare of ex-service personnel, and its various state organisations are vocal in support of familiar conservative causes, such as the preservation of our current national flag, of white Anglo-Celtic dominance in our culture and racial mix, and of the traditional role of women.

The RSL is only one among many veterans groups, but is by far the largest and most visible. Nevertheless it does not enjoy universal acceptance among the veteran community. Even at its height in the 1920s, the League’s membership has been around 265,000, or some 30 per cent of those eligible to join. The RSL claims that Vietnam veterans are joining at the same rate as veterans of previous wars, and that around 15,000 are currently members.

Each generation has fought its own war, at roughly 20 year intervals. Each generation has found some problem with acceptance by their elders, and no later soldiers in Australia have attained the status of those who returned from the First World War, and particularly those who landed at Anzac Cove in 1915 and served on the Gallipoli Peninsula. Each group will eventually have its turn as leaders of the veteran community, as the old soldiers die, but those of the Vietnam generation have particular problems in taking their place.

Very large numbers of Australians, all of them volunteers, served overseas in the First World War and then founded the RSL. Even greater

numbers served in the armed forces in the Second World War (over 660,000). Small contingents went to Korea, Malaya and Borneo. Just over 50,000 served in Vietnam, over half of them volunteers but with a significant number of conscripts. The Vietnam generation of soldiers was thus a comparatively small group, going to a war which was not universally popular, many of them conscripted (though not necessarily very reluctant), and, perhaps most significantly, they did not come home as victors. They did not all find it easy to see themselves as true heirs of the Anzacs, nor did they find it easy to move into the RSL.

The issue which brought their relationship with the RSL to a head, however, was that of Agent Orange.

The Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia (originally the Vietnam Veterans' Action Association) had its beginnings in the concern of veterans that their health and welfare needs were not being met by the DVA and that the RSL was ignoring their plight. The VVAA were operating on two levels: they implemented a program of crisis counselling and intervention, the forerunner to the VVCS; and they lobbied hard and publicly for the investigation of their claims that Australian soldiers in Vietnam had been exposed to a variety of chemicals, and that this exposure had caused widespread health problems. The RSL did not share the VVAA's concerns. Its attitude, overall, has been that "all veterans have a few problems, the blokes who've been to Vietnam didn't have as tough a time anyway"; and that, "the established channels can handle it anyway". These attitudes, as well as some personality clashes, led to bitter relations between the RSL and the VVAA.

The VVAA accused the RSL of "betraying" the Vietnam veterans by siding with the DVA and apologists in the government who initially denied that Australian troops had been exposed at all to any chemicals (this initial foolish statement was soon retracted). "Betrayal" is of course a key motif in the whole Vietnam picture:²¹ the troops were betrayed by the politicians; they were betrayed by protesters in the streets; by unionists; and by the Saigon regime who white-anted their best efforts, and then lost the war. Some Australians even see the Americans as having betrayed them by making a half-hearted attempt at victory. This pattern of betrayal continues a well known theme in Australian military history in which Australia is depicted as a junior ally, better at war than the senior partner, but doomed to fail overall because of the senior partner's faintheartedness or stupidity.

The VVAA in its early years thus continued the story of Vietnam. There was a deep and keenly felt cynicism directed against all authority figures and politicians, both those who sent the troops to Vietnam and those who opposed participation in the conflict; and for many veterans there was hostility to anyone who had not shared their experiences, especially those connected with the anti-war movement or who did not share their views about the problems of veterans. This sense of isolation, almost of paranoia, seems to be one of the factors which kept the

voluntary leadership of the VVAA organisation so motivated. The other more positive factor is a very strong and sincere desire to help other veterans.

The VVAA does not represent all veterans, any more than does the RSL. A variety of veterans groups meets a variety of needs both for veterans in general and those of Vietnam in particular. As well as the unit associations, there are welfare groups self-styled as “non-political” in order to contrast themselves with the VVAA. Indeed some veterans actively dislike the VVAA. It is seen as “political”, as being in conflict with authority, whereas many veterans want a harmonious integration into the dominant RSL/Anzac Day culture. Some resent the VVAA’s portrayal of the veteran as sick or needy with children damaged by chemicals. For many veterans, their identity is not dominated by their war service, and if they join any veterans group they do so for some comradeship and community activity rather than as a total commitment.

Like most self-help groups, the VVAA suffers from chronic shortages of funds and experienced and willing personnel, particularly for mounting and sustaining legal action. Nevertheless, it has been quite successful in recruiting and maintaining membership (it claimed around 15,000 at its peak, though 5,000 seems typical), and most active in providing help to veterans when they need it most. Without the VVAA, particularly without the energy and dedication of its leaders such as Phil Thompson, it seems very unlikely that either the VVCS or the Royal Commission would have been established.

The future of Vietnam Veteran groups

The Royal Commission has been and gone, although some groups are still fighting its findings. The long-term future of the Agent Orange dispute is unclear, and this dispute has been for long the driving force behind the main separate Vietnam veterans action group, the VVAA. If Agent Orange ceases for whatever reason to be an issue—either because chemically-induced damage is accepted as a cause of disability, or because this is finally ruled out—then it is hard to see what special role there will be for Vietnam veterans groups. It appears that membership in the VVAA declined considerably after the Royal Commission ended, and after the resolution of many outstanding issues by the success of the Welcome Home March in October 1987.

It is likely, it seems, that there will be a gradual merging of the various groups, particularly as the VVAA mellows. Many veterans are members of more than one group, and in future years the relatively young Vietnam veterans will in all likelihood take over the RSL. Whether they then change its nature, or become in their turn integrated into its conservative political culture, will no doubt be a point of contention.

Some institutional pressures are already forcing the organisations to work more closely together. For instance, the Vietnam War Veterans Trust, which was set up to disburse the money received from the class

action against Agent Orange in the USA, has representatives from the RSL, from the VVAA, and from other veterans groups.

So too with the committee to establish a special Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial. The VVAA has been the most active supporter of this project, and is raising much of the funds, but the Australian Government has also donated some \$200,000 and the committee to choose the monument's design (from entries in a competition) has a wide range of membership.²²

The VVAA's immediate future probably lies in providing personalised counsel and support to veterans and their families. In this it will be almost an arm of the VVCS, and may even become redundant, being more like the camaraderie groups such as the RSL and the Vietnam Legion of Veterans.

In assessing the effectiveness of the VVAA as an organisation, the most striking thing has been its success at defining the image of "the veteran" through the media. From the time of its formation in 1980, the VVAA depicted the experience of returning from the war as an overwhelmingly negative one. During the 1980s, almost the only discussions of Vietnam in the media were in terms of "the veteran and his problems", problems which have been seen as caused by either exposure to toxic chemicals and/or the unpopularity of the war. The images of the war which linger in the public mind—insofar as they do linger at all—are probably drawn more from American than Australian experiences. The popular culture of the US—its movies, pop music, and television—have been as important in depicting the nature of the war and of the veteran experience as USA political leaders were in defining the nature of the Vietnam "problem" years earlier.

Welcome Home ²³

The return home of the Vietnam veteran has been portrayed in many American films and literary works. The indifference of the method has been universally condemned as an insensitive and alienating approach to the repatriation of a soldier fresh from combat or at least from service in a war zone: take him from his unit; load him on a plane; land him somewhere in the US; and then send him home; once there he is given no parades; no ceremonies; and no peer support during his readjustment period, which may be relatively short (particularly if he remains in the service), or may be a never-ending process.

This picture has been accepted completely as portraying the Australian experience also, but this was not the case for a large number of servicemen. True, Australian soldiers were sometimes, even often, dumped at an airport in the middle of the night and left to make their own way home, but others were treated like war heroes at least briefly. Whether or not this brief welcome home ceremony was sufficient either as comfort, reward, or merely served as a gesture of transition, is indeed arguable, but it is important that the veterans' experiences are recorded

accurately before we can begin to argue about what would be desirable treatment. One hopes that the Vietnam experiences in both the US and Australia would lead to the services adopting as routine the practices of extensive debriefing and group support after any active duty, but neither set of institutions has shown in the past that they are prone to learn expeditiously from soldiers' experiences.

The Australian army prided itself on the morale and group cohesion of its units,²⁴ and the infantry units were rotated on a unit basis rather than individually. They served for 12 months in Vietnam, but before this had sometimes gone through months or even years of training as a unit. Since all individual soldiers normally served 12 months in Vietnam also, this would mean—in theory—that all soldiers went to Vietnam together in their unit and returned with it 12 months later. Unfortunately this did not work out quite so well in practice, and generalising statements that Australian personnel rotation was on a unit basis need to be treated with some caution. The main modification to the group rotation theory came about through the operation of National Service (as the draft was called in Australia). Those who were “called up” were obliged to serve in the army for two years (later reduced to 18 months), and were inducted into the army in four intakes per year, at three month intervals. When their two years service was completed, of course, they were discharged from the army and had no more immediate obligations.

Because the intakes were staggered, so too were the discharges, and some soldiers served only a few months in Vietnam before they returned to Australia. These “nashos”, as they were known, accounted for most of the turnover in the units, but there were also the unavoidable departures occasioned by death, injury, disease, or on compassionate grounds. So, in practice, significant numbers of soldiers even from combat units did not return home with their units. Many, however, seem to have returned in groups, of varying small sizes, with others who had undergone basic training at the same time, and those who trained together always forged strong bonds. (The small size of the Australian army meant that there were only three recruit training battalions, and drafts who had completed their basic training tended to go to the same units.) Other soldiers, from combat and non-combat units alike, returned home as they had arrived in Vietnam: more or less alone. It is not possible to say exactly how many were in each of these categories.

Some soldiers returned quickly, lifted out of their unit and then onto a charter flight, while some came as medevacs in Air Force Hercules. Arguably, the lucky ones took the slower boat trip home, with a chance to begin to adjust to leaving the war zone while still with their support providing unit. But no matter how they returned, readjustment was a difficult time for almost all soldiers—as no doubt it has always been, no matter how heroic the return. The easiest readjustment was, no doubt, for the career soldiers who remained in the army community, many of

whom would choose to return to Vietnam for a second tour. For them there was relatively little contact with the civilian community. There seems to have been little questioning within the services about Australia's role in Vietnam, adding to the continuity of high morale.

Many veterans seem to have only dim memories about the return home, discharge from the army, and readjustment period. For those whose families provided a warm welcome there seems to have been relatively little trauma, but most veterans have tales to tell of being greeted with "haven't seen you for awhile—where've you been?" This apparent lack of knowledge, and, worse, of interest, about where they had been or what they had been doing, was the most typical remembered reaction, although there were also cases of hostility directed at the returning soldiers, especially in the later years of the war.

Public opinion polls and the results of two federal elections showed that the Australian electorate was not, at least initially, particularly opposed to the war. On the contrary, the reception given to those troops who *did* march on their return home, shows that there was abundant warmth and welcome in the community towards the soldiers. It is an interesting aspect of the collective veteran memory of Vietnam that these earliest "welcome home" marches seem to have been so comprehensively forgotten. The truth is that all of the battalions marched in capital cities when they returned to their home bases—sixteen marches in all—accompanied by other troops who had returned at or near that time. Most of these marches took place in Sydney and Brisbane, but there were some in Adelaide and Townsville (a provincial town in north Queensland which has an army base nearby). From the first march, in June 1966 in Sydney, until the last one, in December 1971 in Townsville, the troops were cheered and clapped by thousands—even hundred of thousands—of onlookers. Looking back, the remarkable thing is how little the spirit of public welcome for the soldiers seemed to be affected by the growing anti-war feeling. The final march was just before Christmas 1971, in Townsville:

Thousands of Townsville people turned on a rousing heroes' welcome. Cheering drowned the sound of marching feet for three city blocks as Townsville made the most of the last major parade by troops from Vietnam. The marchers were swamped with streamers and ticker-tape thrown from balconies and roadside vantage points. The crowd which packed the Flinders Street footpaths to capacity has been described as the largest ever to turn out and welcome troops returning from the war zone.²⁵

The End of the War

The parade in Townsville almost marked the end of the war for *Australia*, but *significantly, it did not mean the end of the war in general, nor was it an occasion for rejoicing or for the sort of victory celebrations that had heralded Armistice Day at the end of the First World War, or*

Victory in the Pacific Day in 1945. There was, of course, no victory to celebrate.

Australia's end to its commitment was aptly termed a "withdrawal". But some soldiers and others in the wider community retained the idea that Australian forces *were* somehow victorious in at least their own province of Phuoc Tuy. The argument goes that Australia's war in Phuoc Tuy resulted in the substantial destruction of the Viet Cong forces there; that the province at the time of the withdrawal of the Task Force was "secure"; and it is added, generally, that had Australia, as a nation and a military presence, been sufficiently large and committed to waging war all over the south of Vietnam, then the final result would have been quite different. We, it is claimed, would have won.²⁶

It is important to appreciate this view of the war, in order to understand the attitude of Vietnam veterans in Australia. Not all of them, by any means, make these claims to partial let alone total potential victory; but a significant number do, and are to be found at all levels of the Army and of veterans' organisations. Many of the more modest make the defensible claim that the Australian forces performed very well in Vietnam, and in this were true heirs of Anzac. This claim too is important for an understanding of the position of Vietnam veterans. American forces were perceived as not only beaten, in that they abandoned the war, but Australian soldiers also tend to be very patronising about the combat performance of American soldiers; seeing them as having been "beaten" in many instances at the tactical level. They tend to ignore the great differences between the sheer scale of their efforts and the American commitment, and also the extent to which they relied on the Americans for logistic and operational support. Nevertheless, there has been none of the postwar criticism of the armed forces in Australia that occurred in the United States, let alone any suggestion that the Australian forces in Vietnam "disintegrated".

The sight of the tanks rolling into the Presidential Palace during the "fall" of Saigon in 1975 dispelled the illusion of victory for some of the committed; others still maintain that "we won". But the events of 1975 were the climax to a war which had ground on through so many lives for so many years. After the ownership of the south was finally resolved, and the Vietnam question was buried, there began a quiet period for Vietnam veterans. No longer were they participants in any sort of conflict, military or political; theirs was very much a forgotten war, but at least for veterans in Australia it was not as discredited as in the USA, nor had their part in it been subjected to so much criticism.

The decade after Vietnam was one of considerable social change in Australia, and the issue of Vietnam and of its veterans was not on the agenda. Some of the issues which did come to the fore, however, such as those involving the re-definitions of masculinity and femininity, and the place of multiculturalism and of non-Anglo-Celtic migrants (particularly those of Asian extraction) in Australia, did bear directly on the experiences

of the veterans. Were they being made to feel that fighting against Asian communists, for other Asians, was somehow an important contribution? Was the whole Anzac myth now somehow out-of-place? (The 75th Anniversary of Gallipoli in April 1990 revitalised interest in the whole Anzac mythology. The intense media flirtation was nothing if not in marked contrast to the near disdain of the previous decade or more.)

The myth of Anzac comes from an older Australia, a simpler and more homogeneous country, where masculine virtues were supreme and unchallenged and the British or American empires were glorious to be dependent upon. Anzac Day, the main ritual celebration of the myth, is not a place for subtleties (though it no doubt means different things to different people), nor for the celebration of pluralism and differences. Vietnam, with all its ambiguities, does not fit easily into the sequence of Australian wars, for even though it was typical in being an alliance war with Australia participating to ensure the future protection of a great and powerful friend, this time we were not on the winning side, and some even argued that we were not on the right side.

All that most veterans wanted was to be able to feel like the veterans of previous wars, but there seems to have been a doubt that they were fully worthy. Some of them were sneered at by older soldiers in RSL clubs—"you blokes never had it tough like we did"—and others obviously had doubts themselves about whether they truly deserved to be ranked with the Anzacs. These doubts may, however, have been largely of their own making, as the public seems to have welcomed them on Anzac marches and their numbers there were a welcome addition to the declining ranks of the veterans of the earlier world wars. From the earliest years of the war, soldiers who had returned from Vietnam took part in Anzac marches. In 1967, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported:

. . . in the continuing story of the Anzac tradition, soldiers who had returned from the conflict in Vietnam marched down Martin Place with veterans of Korea, Malaya and Borneo and members of the 3rd and 6th Battalions RAR.²⁷

According to the report the young onlookers were the ones leading the cheers amongst the 100,000 who lined the streets. In the immediately following years, the *Sydney Morning Herald* always made special mention of the Vietnam veterans in Anzac marches, culminating in 1972 when they were given the honour of leading the march in Sydney. This was the high point of their participation, as far as media reporting was concerned. In 1973 and 1974 they were still mentioned, but in the years after this the celebration of Anzac Day itself underwent change. It became more of a focus for dissenting activities, and was reported as such in the major cities. Groups such as Women Against Rape in War (a particular favourite amongst soldiers as the butt of jokes), Gay Ex-Servicemen's Associations, and ethnic communities with various and

competing war histories and agendas of their own, began to demand the right to participate in the march. The RSL fought hard to retain the ownership of Anzac and to disallow these minorities central participation.

During this time the Vietnam veterans were largely unheard of, until the Agent Orange issue was aired at an Anzac Day march in Sydney in 1980. About 100 veterans marched with small pieces of orange paper on their jackets, but the organisers were eager to emphasise that they were not radicals:

- This is not a political protest. The crepe paper signifies our concern over the issue. We are the conservative element in Australia. We are members of RSL clubs. We served our country and we would like our country to serve us.²⁸

This statement could well be taken as the theme of the 1987 Welcome Home March.

The success of the welcome home marches in the USA, particularly that in Washington D.C. in 1986, was contagious. A committee was set up in Sydney in 1986, supported by a variety of veterans groups, the state branch of the RSL (*not* the national body), and some Sydney local government representatives. The power of the Vietnam war to divide, still, was seen in some of the exchanges reported as occurring in the chambers of the Sydney City Council. A veteran on the Council accused those opposed to the march of being part of the “gay communist faction”, while a councillor who had been an anti-conscription activist countered that “there has never been an attempt at repatriation for those who chose the path which history has shown was the morally right path”.²⁹ This idea was repeated frequently on an Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) TV programme, *Hindsight*, broadcast in May 1990, which marked the 20th anniversary of the anti-war Moratorium marches.

In the days preceding the march, the media was full of contrary opinions about what the march, and indeed the war itself, was all about. While some saw it as a reconciliation and were willing to let bygones-be-bygones, others were keen to argue their case yet again. Conservative writers in the national daily newspaper, the *Australian*, explained why “It was right for us to be there”, and blamed “Left-liberal anti-South Vietnam, pro-Hanoi forces” who were “traitors to their own troops. They are the ones who should apologise to our veterans and to the Vietnamese who marched with them”.³⁰ (Many Australians resented the activities of one university group who had collected money to send to the Viet Cong for medical supplies—it still rankled years later.)

The main Welcome Home March was held on the morning of Saturday 4 October 1987 in Sydney, followed by an afternoon and evening of congregation and further ceremony, including a concert. Other local and much smaller marches and celebrations were subsequently held all over Australia.

Many veterans in the Sydney march took delight in ignoring the Labor Party Prime Minister, R.J. L. (Bob) Hawke, as he took the salute on the steps of the Sydney Town Hall, because the Labor Party had (according to the march organiser) “so strongly opposed the forces” presence in Vietnam”. (This in fact was not strictly true. Though the Labor Party did eventually propose withdrawing Australian troops, by the time it came to government, in December 1972, the only troops remaining were the advisers, the major troop withdrawals having taken place under a Liberal Government, but many veterans misremember the sequence of events.)

The media treated the 1987 Welcome Home March in much the same way as they had treated the war and its veterans in the past, with glib and often inaccurate analysis, and using images based on the “sick veteran” as portrayed by the VVAA in their submissions to the Royal Commission and through their journal *Debrief* and elsewhere. The same image occurs throughout much Australian Vietnam literature, film, and television.³¹ Just before Anzac Day 1987 the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that:

For Australians who served in Vietnam the stench of a “dirty war” has been hard to shake. They have always trailed at the end of Army contingents in the Anzac Day parade—as if an afterthought.³²

A few days later the same paper in an editorial wrongly stated: “For the first time, Vietnam veterans led the Anzac Day march in Sydney” (as we have seen, they led it in 1972). The same editorial emphasised the potential of the Welcome Home March as a ritual signifying the reintegration of veterans into the community; but it warned against believing that the parade was in itself enough. It needed to mark a new beginning, to be a sign that we had all “begun to gain a sense of historical perspective on the profound conflicts which the Vietnam War aroused”.³³

Whether this in fact has happened is debatable, but the march was a great success for the veterans involved, probably almost half of those who had served in Vietnam (the march was estimated at 22,000), including veterans of the ARVN marching under the old Saigon flag. The brilliant spring weather saw huge, friendly crowds lining the streets, cheering the veterans and leaving little doubt as to whether they were welcome home or not. There were none of the feared “incidents” from former anti-war groups, and most of the signs and crowd comments (not to mention the commentary on the nationally-broadcast televised version of the event³⁴) were distinctly “pro-war”. The reunions will provide warm memories for years to come, and it seems that the march did provide some sort of finale to the war for many of the veterans.

But as with every facet of the Vietnam war, there was not complete consensus about the march. Outsiders viewed it from various

perspectives, some seeing the community acceptance of the veterans as being proof that “it was right for us to be there”. Even within the veteran community, there were those who ignored it, as being irrelevant to their present lives, and there were those who saw it as little more than “a recruiting drive for the RSL”.

This was very much a minority criticism of the march, but it does raise the very important question of how far integration of the war and veterans results in their incorporation into a national myth which is rather militaristic. Michael Clark has described this process in the United States, saying that the cultural apparatus which had so successfully channelled the memories of the Vietnam war to fit the patterns of other, more acceptable war experiences, has finally offered “with a triumphant flourish . . . the spectacle of its most successful creation, the veteran who will fight the next war.”³⁵

Is this what “being an Anzac” really means? Is this what the veterans would want? Is it the price of acceptance?

¹ Coral Bell. *Dependent Ally: A Study in Australian Foreign Policy*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1988.

² Paul Kennedy. *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, Fontana, London, 1988, p. 522.

³ See my *The Myth of the Digger*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1985.

⁴ For examples, see my “The myth of the digger in Australian Society”, in Hugh Smith (ed). *Australians on Peace and War*, Australian Defence Force Academy, Canberra, 1987.

⁵ The following table provides precise figures of total Vietnam service, and a breakdown of the kinds of casualties sustained.

Table 2:
Breakdown of Vietnam Casualties.

Served in Vietnam	49 211
Killed in action	327
Killed accidentally	25
Died of wounds	71
Missing	4
Non-battle casualty deaths	74
Total Deaths	501
Wounded in action	2609
Injured/ill in action	331
Non Battle Casualties—injured/ill	731
Total Non-Fatal Casualties	3131

Source: Department of Defence.

A version of this graph originally appeared in Jane Ross. "Australia's Legacy: The Vietnam Veterans", in Gregory Pemberton (ed). *Vietnam Remembered*, Weldon, Sydney, 1990, pp. 187-213. Some veterans' associations in both the USA and Australia would hold that those veterans who have died through causes of a war-related nature, an area of dispute of course, constitute additions to the above figures. It is certainly the case that some wounded veterans who have died, or sadly may still die, from their wounds do constitute "battle" casualties. With that in mind, any figures on Vietnam, as of some older wars, are still open to emendation.

⁶ See their journal *Debrief*.

⁷ For more detail on this section see my "Australia's Legacy: the Vietnam Veterans" in Gregory Pemberton (ed). *Vietnam Remembered*, Weldon, Sydney, 1990, pp. 199-204.

⁸ *Royal Commission on the Use and Effects of Chemical Agents on Australian Personnel in Vietnam*, AGPS, Canberra, 1985, vol. 8, p. 38.

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 46.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, vol. 4, p. 399.

¹¹ *Australian*, 12-13 May 1990.

¹² Administrative Appeals Tribunal. *Repatriation Commission v. Maree Smith* (1990) V 87/56.

¹³ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 April 1990.

¹⁴ *Case Control Study of Congenital Anomalies and Vietnam Service*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1983.

¹⁵ As acknowledged by Professor Field in communication to this author; see also B. Field and C. Kerr. "Reproductive behaviour and consistent patterns of abnormality in offspring of Vietnam veterans", *Journal of Medical Genetics*, 25, 1988, pp. 819-26.

¹⁶ *Australian Veterans Health Studies. The Mortality Report. Part I. A Retrospective Cohort Study of Mortality Among Australian National Servicemen of the Vietnam Conflict Era, and an Executive Summary of the Mortality Report*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1984.

¹⁷ The Royal Commission version of PTSD included the following symptoms: flashbacks to terrifying events; nightmares; irritability; rage reaction; dizzy spells; anxiety; insomnia; depression; guilt feelings; headaches; low back pain; ulcer; migraine; irritable bowel syndrome; irritable colon; hypertension; paranoia; suspicion; crowd phobia; alcoholism. *Royal Commission on the Use and Effects of Chemical Agents on Australian Personnel in Vietnam*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1985, 9 volumes, vol. 8, pp. 23-4. For further references to mental health studies, see Jeffrey Streimer & Christopher Tennant. "Psychiatric Aspects of the Vietnam War", in Ken Maddock and Barry Wright (eds). *War: Australia and Vietnam*, Harper & Row, Sydney 1987, pp. 230-261.

¹⁸ There is no comprehensive published material on the operations of the Repatriation system, and the author thanks the staff of the Veterans' Review Board for their assistance. Further detail can be found in my "Australia's Legacy", *op. cit.*; a quite brief summary of the Repatriation System is given by one of the commissioners, Major General Alan Morrison. "Repatriation", in Harry Heseltine (ed). *The Shock of Battle, Occasional Papers* 16, English Department, University College, Canberra, 1988, pp. 117-22.

¹⁹ *East v. Repatriation Commission* (1987), WAG. 130 of 1986.

²⁰ On the veterans' groups, their own publications are the best sources. See also the *Royal Commission on the Use and Effects of Chemical Agents on Australian Personnel in Vietnam*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra,

1985, 9 vols; and Graham Walker. "The Vietnam Veterans' Association of Australia", in Maddock and Wright, *op. cit.*, pp. 206-229.

²¹ This feeling of betrayal is not nearly as strong in Australia, one would guess, as in the USA.

²² The memorial will be a sculpture in Canberra, on Anzac Parade, a wide avenue leading up to the Australian War Memorial. The latter has the functions of commemorating all who have served in war, with rolls of honour, and it is also a museum and research centre

²³ For more detail on this section, see my "Australia's Legacy", *op. cit.*, pp. 188-92

²⁴ See my "Australian Soldiers in Vietnam", in Peter King (ed). *Australia's Vietnam*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1983, pp. 72-99.

²⁵ *Daily Bulletin* (Townsville), 18 December 1971.

²⁶ Terry Burstall. "Policy Contradictions of the Australian Task Force, Vietnam, 1966", in this volume, pp. 35-49, provides a salutary revision of this view.

²⁷ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 April 1967.

²⁸ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 April 1980.

²⁹ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 December 1986.

³⁰ *Australian*, 10-11 October 1987.

³¹ For some introductory comments, see Ann Mari Jordens. "Cultural Influences: the Vietnam War and Australia", *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, 15, October 1989, pp. 3-14; on various popular images of the "sick" veteran and the Australian debt to US imagery see Jeff Doyle. "Bringing whose war home? Vietnam and American myths in Australian popular culture"; and Peter Pierce. "Australian and American Literature of the Vietnam War", both in Peter Pierce, *et al* (eds). *Vietnam Days*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1991; and Peter Pierce. "The Funny Place': Australian Literature and the War in Vietnam", in this volume, pp. 98-108.

³² *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 April 1987.

³³ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 May 1987.

³⁴ A 30 minute documentary, *The Last March*, produced by Martyn Goddard *et al*, was broadcast by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) television in 1988. For some comments on this documentary see Jeff Doyle. "Bringing whose war home? Vietnam and American myths in Australian popular culture" in Peter Pierce, *et al* (eds). *Vietnam Days*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1991.

³⁵ Michael Clark. "Remembering Vietnam", *Cultural Critique*, 3, Spring 1986, pp. 46-78; see p. 49.

Who Cares for the Caregiver?

Jan Bassett

“Generally speaking I would not begin to comment on the American Hospitals or nursing, our group was so small compared with their huge cumulus”,¹ writes Nell Espie, one of the forty-three officers of the Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps (RAANC) who served in South Vietnam between 1967 and 1971.² The “vast cumulus”, by contrast, comprised more than five thousand members of the Army Nurse Corps, the RAANC’s United States counterpart, who nursed in South Vietnam between 1962 and 1973.³

Not only was the Australian group much smaller than the American, it was considerably more homogeneous. Its size and nature brought both advantages and disadvantages, then and in later years. “Who cares for the caregiver?” looks at the backgrounds of the Australian nurses, at their experiences in South Vietnam, and at some of the conclusions which they have since drawn from those experiences. It focuses in particular upon twelve nurses who completed questionnaires for me between 1986 and 1990.⁴ They can be taken as being representative of the larger group.

“I was surprised to learn a number of them [American nursing officers working at the 36th Evacuation Hospital, Vung Tau] were recently out of Nursing College and that some were married”, recalls one of the Australian nurses, Jan McCarthy, whose tour of duty in South Vietnam lasted from May 1968 to May 1969. “At this time if you were married in our system you had to resign so this was quite a surprise.”⁵ She and her RAANC colleagues who went to South Vietnam were all single (although the regulation preventing married women from remaining in the corps was changed in 1970), all women (the RAANC’s first male officer was only appointed in 1972), and all officers. (The US Army Nurse Corps sent both male and female nursing officers to South Vietnam.) Although female other ranks were enlisted in the RAANC at this time, they were not sent to South Vietnam. Male other ranks at this stage were enlisted in the Royal Australian Army Medical Corps (RAAMC), not the RAANC, although this was based upon an “understanding” rather than a written policy.⁶

The RAANC nurses who served in South Vietnam were all white. Eleven of the twelve in my sample were Australian-born. Furthermore the same eleven all described their parents as Australian. In 1971, only 79.78 per cent of the Australian population in general had been born in Australia.⁷ The twelfth nurse was New Zealand-born of New Zealand parents. She and six of the Australian-born nurses had been born in

rural areas. The twelve nurses in general came from larger than average families. The average number of children (including the nurses) in each of their families was 3.8. The highest average number of live births for married women born in Australia between 1898 and 1928, during which time one assumes that most of their mothers were born, was only 3.1.⁸ The twelve nurses' fathers included an army officer, a public servant, a railway guard, a psychiatric nurse, a works overseer, several farmers, an accountant, and a company representative; most of their mothers had been engaged in home duties. The twelve nurses were educated at government or Catholic schools (six are Catholics, five Protestants), except for one who attended a Church of England school, in most cases completing between two and four of a possible six years of secondary schooling. Two worked as shop assistants, one as a telephonist, one as a secretary (and later as an other rank [the Australian nomenclature for enlisted personnel] in the RAANC), and another on her family's farm, before beginning their nursing training, which the others commenced soon after leaving school.

Why did they become nurses? "I really cant [sic] remember, I think some of my school friends were doing it. It was a way to get to the city. I did not want to marry the boy next door and have kids", writes Elizabeth Healey. Economic factors certainly influenced some. "I had always had an interest in a health-related profession. [In] 1963 (my first year of tertiary study) University fees were still being levied and unless a student was wealthy or awarded a university scholarship—the entry to University was prohibitive [sic] to the average student. Nursing was a 'secure' alternative profession", recalls Diane Badcock, who had completed the full six years of secondary schooling. "I had really wanted to do Medicine but had to leave school early (family situation) so I then opted for nursing and have never regretted my decision", writes Pam Barlow. Growing up during the Second World War, during which Australian army nurses had a high public profile, also inspired some. In reply to a question asking: "What factors influenced your decision to become a nurse?", Jan McCarthy writes: "Not sure. Always wanted to do nursing for as long as I can remember. Perhaps [it was the influence of the] war years and living in an army town [Seymour, Victoria]—[I] often saw members of RAANC in town [and it] may have influenced me".

Her answer also helps to explain why she and some of the other nurses had decided to join the army. Nell Espie, one of the older nurses to serve in South Vietnam, who had joined the RAANC in June 1951 and served in Japan and Korea during the Korean War, for example, had also been influenced by Second World War nurses. "Contact with Returned Sisters during post basic nurse training. Advertisement for nurses to serve in Korea", are the reasons she gives for joining the army. Only two of the twelve joined the army specifically because of the Vietnam War. "I was very keen to nurse in S.V.N.[South Viet Nam]", writes Diane Badcock. "With my familial contacts & prior knowledge of the services,

I had no apprehension in applying to join the R.A.A.N.C.” Her father, uncle, brother, and cousin had all served in the army at various times. Ten of the other nurses came from families in which numerous members had belonged to the armed services, particularly during the two world wars; several had brothers who also served in the Vietnam War. All probably had some sympathy with the following view espoused by Trish Ferguson: “I had this belief then (as I still have) that each of us should do some time in the services.” Most of the forty-three nurses originally surveyed were Army, rather than just Vietnam, nurses. The minimum period which any of the forty-three had spent as officers in the RAANC before going to South Vietnam was seven months, the maximum was nineteen years and one month, and the average was approximately three years and one month.⁹ Sixty per cent of their US Army Nurse Corps counterparts, however, had had less than six months’ Army experience before going to South Vietnam.¹⁰ Eight of the twelve nurses in my sample were in their twenties when they went to South Vietnam (the three youngest were twenty-three), the remaining four being thirty-five (a matron), forty-two, forty-four, and forty-five (another matron).

“We did not lose any Nurses in Vietnam and we were located in one area”, writes Jan McCarthy. “The US Army Nurse Corps were much larger and were located throughout the country in some instances further forward of their hospitals, nursing in MUST [Medical Unit Self Transportable] units I understand they lost some nurses when units were rocketed by the Viet Cong.”¹¹ Eight members, in all, of the US Army Nurse Corps, died in South Vietnam; two in a helicopter crash near Saigon on 18 February 1966, four in an aeroplane crash near Qui Nhon on 30 November 1967, one from disease on 8 July 1968, and another from shrapnel wounds which she received during a rocket attack at the 312th Evacuation Hospital at Chu Lai on 8 June 1969.¹²

Four members of the RAANC joined 8 Australian Field Ambulance at Vung Tau, the site of 1 Australian Logistic Support Group, in May 1967 (nurses having been requested by the Australian Director General of Medical Services), then joined 1 Australian Field Hospital when it was raised there in 1968. After these nurses completed their tours of duty the nursing strength was increased to six. By 1969 there were nine RAANC officers on the staff. In that particular year there were more than 900 US Army Nurse Corps officers in South Vietnam, the highest at any stage during the war.¹³ When 1 Australian Field Hospital was closed in 1971, there were twelve nurses on its staff, including one matron, four captains, and seven lieutenants. Two of these nurses were members of the Royal New Zealand Nursing Corps (RNZNC). In total, seven RNZNC nurses worked with the RAANC at Vung Tau. Twenty-nine of the RAANC officers completed their twelve month tours of duty; the others, who remained in South Vietnam for periods ranging between three and ten months, returned to Australia for health reasons or because of the hospital’s closure.¹⁴

No one really attempted to prepare the nurses for what was to come. "We received no professional brief before leaving Australia—the only briefing from the senior nursing officer in the COMD [Command], was on what to take",¹⁵ states Leslie McGurgan, in a belated "brief" written and presented in 1990. Perhaps, in some ways, no one could prepare them. Describing her flight to Saigon in April 1969, Nell Espie, also a veteran of the Korean War, says that "this occasion seemed different somehow to the previous experiences [of travelling with troops going on active service] ... The Vietnam War was different, or seemed so even then to me".¹⁶ The nurses' sense of dislocation, of being thrust from one world to another very different one, must have been underlined by their constant changing of clothes on the way. "We left Australia in summer uniform, but had to change into civilian dress before landing in Singapore and later back into uniform to arrive in Saigon",¹⁷ Nell Espie recalls.

The first four nurses, in particular, found themselves working in basic conditions. Heat, sand, and a lack of running water all caused problems in the field ambulance's huts, which were situated in sand dunes near the beach. One of the original nurses, Terrie Ross (formerly Lieutenant Roche) remembers that, "Supplies and equipment were only just adequate—however justified perhaps by the fact [that] Fd Amb was doing a Hospital job". Conditions gradually improved, and by the time that Nell Espie took over as matron in April 1969 she found a "well established" hospital. "The wards, I.C.U. [Intensive Care Unit], operating theatre and some departments were airconditioned—the mess quarters and offices were not." Supplies and equipment also improved. "In Vietnam [they were] initially not very good under Australian system of supply it became a lot more efficient using the American system", comments Jan McCarthy. When necessary, the Australians also frequently borrowed from the Americans. "One weekend we had to borrow blood from the Americans, when we had used 500 bottles!—not including ordinary fluid replacements", recalls Trish Ferguson.

"Orderlies at first were quite resentful [towards the nurses] but after [a] short time [became] co-operative", Terrie Ross recalls. The nurses were responsible for running the wards, and for training the orderlies [similar to US corpsmen], but were not granted control of the latter. "The Sisters did not know one day from the next which medics would be allocated for ward duties", Leslie McGurgan reports. "This in turn restricted their ability to train their charges and provide some continuity not only in training but also in the nursing care of their patients." There were other anomalies caused by the division of labour by gender, one of the most notable being that relating to salaries. "The corporal in the operating theatre was paid more than the nursing officer, who was a captain, in charge of the operating theatre",¹⁸ Leslie McGurgan also notes. Despite such problems, the doctors, nurses, and orderlies developed a professional relationship which Diane Badcock,

who as Lieutenant Lawrence worked at 1 Australian Field Hospital from February 1969 to February 1970, describes as “nothing short of a miracle”.

The 110-bed 1 Australian Field Hospital was considerably smaller than the 600-bed 36th Evacuation Hospital, the main American hospital with which RAANC nurses had contact in South Vietnam and which was situated on the airfield at Vung Tau until about 1970.¹⁹ Jan McCarthy, who made a number of professional visits to the 36th Evacuation Hospital, was grateful to belong to the smaller hospital. “The operating theatre had 13 operating tables compared with our two in one theatre”, she recalls. “It was large and I felt I wouldn’t like to work in this area with 13 operating teams going at the one time.”²⁰ There were, however, some disadvantages in working in a hospital with a very small staff. There was no backup for the nurses. When the need arose, the hospital’s handful of nurses simply kept on nursing. Leslie McGurgan records, for example, that: “An outbreak of malaria in 1968/69 took the 100 bed hospital to 259 with no extra staff.”²¹ The RAANC nurses were usually rostered to work twelve hours a day (with some shifts being split), six days a week, but often worked for much longer hours. Pam Barlow, who as Lieutenant Matthews worked in South Vietnam from May 1968 to May 1969, notes that hours of work “could be anything up to 16 hours—you lost count after awhile.” Leslie McGurgan also records that “during the Tet offensive in 1968/69 the OTT [operating theatre and triage] worked around the clock for several days.”²² Beryl Hogarth, who worked at the hospital from August 1970 to April 1971, remembers working at times for “over 14 days without a break”.

Both Australian and American nurses were called upon to undertake very heavy and stressful nursing in South Vietnam. “Compared with previous wars, in SVN [South Viet Nam] we had a much higher proportion of very severe blast injuries compared to gun shot wounds; and due to the rapid evacuation and triage system these casualties became a very heavy nursing commitment—in previous wars these patients, they would never have reached a hospital bed”, explains one Australian nurse. The Australian hospital treated some American servicemen (but they were usually soon moved to American hospitals), along with South Vietnamese servicemen and civilians, North Vietnamese and Viet Cong prisoners-of-war, but most of its patients were Australian and New Zealand servicemen. The most common surgical and intensive care unit nursing, as described by Trish Ferguson, involved: “Mine Explosions—traumatic amputations. Massive and enormous amounts of debridements. Shock lung, malarial lung, cerebral malaria, Laparotomies & Thoracotomies from being peppered by shrapnel”. The stress of such nursing was exacerbated by the fact that the nurses’ professional qualifications did not always match their appointments. The Australian nurses, however, were probably not pushed to the extent that some of their American counterparts were. “Professionally they did

more advanced procedures than we attempted such as IV [intravenous] therapy, intubation of patients, and insertion of chest drainage”, Jan McCarthy says of US Army Nurse Corps officers. “At this time in our system Doctors covered [sic] these aspects. I think they [the American nurses] were trained in IV therapy aspects but were often placed in situations for which they weren’t trained.”²³ The very speedy evacuation of patients to Australia meant that the nurses “did not have the satisfaction of seeing the results of [their] labours”.²⁴

There was “No debrief following medivacs [sic] (indeed there was no time for any professional training at all)”.²⁵ How then did the nurses cope, or attempt to cope, with such stressful nursing? The main way was by relying upon one another. “We were a closely knit group with traditions and a corps background. I got the impression the US Nurse Corps did not have this closeness amongst its officers and they felt somewhat alone”, Jan McCarthy writes. “We relieved our stress levels by discussing our patients injuries, KIAs etc amongst ourselves and we felt we gave each other support. I don’t know how the Americans reacted but I believe their stress levels were greater than ours throughout their tours of Vietnam.”²⁶

The nurses’ accommodation at Vung Tau was “Primitive, rivalled WWI but liveable—night duty was a problem—trying to sleep with the heat”. During the dry season, lack of water was a problem. Trish Ferguson recalls that “often only one 2-minute shower [was] allowed daily—[due to] water shortage when water lines [were] blown up”. The deep trench latrines were, in Pam Barlow’s words, “quite revolting”. During the day the Australian nurses wore grey ward dresses (which some were fond of because they symbolized Australian Army nursing traditions), unlike the white dresses worn by American and New Zealand nurses; on night duty, they wore jungle greens. Elizabeth Healey, who as Lieutenant Hall served in South Vietnam between June 1969 and June 1970, considers that the uniform was: “Totally inappropriate ... Too hot and difficult to maintain in SVN. Due to lack of starch and the wet. Still wearing veils!!?? We coped with great difficulty—spent hours on uniform no starch—had it sent from home to SVN or bought it on the ‘black market’”. Most of the nurses found the American food to be, in Maggie Hopcraft’s words, “an acquired taste”. The “Paper Pulp and Cranberry Jam”, as the turkey and cranberry sauce was dubbed, was, in the words of another Australian nurse, “Hideous stuff!!”.

“As the matron I was responsible to provide adequate nursing coverage [with] only 25% of staff to be allowed out of the unit at one time. With only 7 sisters later nine it allowed for little activity”, recalls one of the hospital’s matrons, Nell Espie. In order to let the nurses have as much recreation as possible, she usually remained at the hospital herself. When they could, the nurses swam at the local beach, held barbecues, saw films in theatres at the American and Australian bases, visited the local town about two miles away, and went to parties, at which

some had their only contact with the American nurses. Elizabeth Healey says of the American nurses whom she met at such parties, "I thought they were older than us overall, more 'sophisticated' in sexual behaviour". Sometimes the nurses attended concerts at the Peter Badcoe Club in the compound. Diane Badcock, however, says, "I only went to one. I felt they were male audience orientated/objective & females in the audience were not at all expected to be present". Some of the nurses sought out more work in their spare time. "It may be interesting to note that in our off duty time many of us adopted an orphanage in Vung Tau Village—together with others like engineers, carpenters, Medics, Pharmacists & Doctors etc.", writes Pam Barlow. "We helped in many ways to make life a little easier for these beautiful children who had lost their families due to war." The nurses were allowed five days' rest and recuperation leave, which some spent in Penang, and three days' rest "in country", that is, in South Vietnam. Nell Espie describes her time in Penang as "a life saver".

"There was no debrief on our return to Australia", reflects Leslie McGurgan. What happened to the nurses after they returned home? How, if at all, have their Vietnam experiences affected their lives? What conclusions have they drawn from those experiences? Three nurses left the army immediately; two, the current Director of Nursing Services—Army (DNS-A, or Matron-in-Chief), Colonel J.C.A. McCarthy, and Lieutenant-Colonel L.M. McGurgan, were still in the Army as of July 1990, and the other thirty-eight remained in the army for further periods ranging between one month and seventeen years and ten months, and averaging three years and eleven months. Most of the RAANC nurses who served in South Vietnam held short term commissions in the army, which lasted for two years and could be renewed for further two year periods. Excluding Colonel McCarthy (who as of July 1990 has been a RAANC officer for twenty-three years and ten months) and Lieutenant Colonel McGurgan (twenty-one years and four months), the Vietnam nurses served as officers in the RAANC for total periods (including their Vietnam service) ranging from one year and six months to twenty-eight years and eight months, averaging seven years and ten months.²⁷

Some married after they returned to Australia, but the exact figures are difficult to ascertain. Seven of the twelve who completed questionnaires did so. At least three of these women left the Army at about the time of their marriages. Three of the seven, perhaps not surprisingly, married army officers, one of whom had served as an army pharmacist in South Vietnam, another married a photojournalist who had also worked there. Six of the married women have had children, two having three, the others two each.

Unlike their predecessors from the First World War, many of whom could not face nursing again after that war, many of the Vietnam nurses have continued nursing in one form or another. All of the twelve nurses in my sample have since nursed, either in the army (in five cases), or in civilian hospitals, for considerable periods. One, who has nursed

in neurology and neurosurgery fields, completed a post-basic intensive care unit course, worked in ICU (Intensive Care Units) at different hospitals, and has been a clinical instructor in a post-basic ICU course at a school of nursing, since her return from South Vietnam, says of her army experience in general that: "It may have affected my move towards ICU but I'm not sure. I was always trauma inclined anyway". Some, like many of their American counterparts, have found civilian nursing frustrating after their wartime experiences. "Ever since Vietnam, I have been frustrated in civilian nursing by the enormous inadequacies of the system, & the enormous attention paid to non-issues", writes Trish Ferguson. "[I] Have pursued numerous avenues (i.e. certificates in nursing, degree in Psych. & Sociology, different nursing experiences.)—to no avail.—this during the '70s when I did not acknowledge I had been in Vietnam".

"It hasn't been until now that I have realised how much Vietnam in particular has moulded my life", writes Pam Barlow, who believes that she matured a great deal during her time in South Vietnam. "You can't experience what we did and not be more aware of the Quality of Life. There were some of the Army nurses who were affected both medically & socially." Little is known of the nurses' health while they were overseas. "Health of nurses—no records", Leslie McGurgan states bluntly. Several nurses, as mentioned earlier, returned to Australia for health reasons before their tours of duty were due to end. One of the forty-three nurses died from illness, thought at the time not to be war-related (although this has recently been questioned) in November 1971, after her discharge from the army. Many of the Australian nurses claim to be grateful for having had the opportunity of serving in South Vietnam, and consider themselves to be better people for the experience. One, for example, believes herself to be "a more tolerant, more compassionate & understanding person because of it". They have, however, paid a high price for such personal development. Like some of their American counterparts,²⁸ some of the Australian nurses have exhibited symptoms of Post-Trauma Stress Disorder (PTSD). The nurse who made the above comment, for example, has had almost daily migraine headaches and has awoken constantly at night, since her service in Vietnam. Restlessness and a low tolerance of frustration, especially in regard to civilian nursing, are also frequently hinted at in nurses' comments. Whether they view this positively or negatively, some of the nurses also see themselves as isolated, both from civilian nurses, and, perhaps more interestingly, from returned nurses from other conflicts. "I feel we have had something special in our lives that sets us apart from non-Army nurses", writes one nurse. "We feel as returned sisters from S.V.N. very isolated and consequently an isolated group—very distinct from previous wars & those sisters", writes another.

Strong feelings of sisterhood have sustained many of the Australian nurses in the postwar years. One says of her time in South Vietnam:

“This year cemented and made friendships which are peculiar and special to only those nurses who served in that theatre of war—these friendships continue after 20 yrs & I cannot see them diminishing”. Even one of the nurses who has not remained in touch with her former colleagues comments, “I have lost touch with the girls I worked with but I often think of them”. The RAANC nurses who served in South Vietnam have had to rely upon one another for support, both at the time of their wartime service and in subsequent years. Twenty years after going to South Vietnam, Leslie McGurgan, writing of the need for debriefing after medical and surgical emergencies, says that “we did not ‘care’ for the care givers, only the patients”.²⁹

¹ *Autograph Letter Signed*, Nell Espie to Jan Bassett, no date [June 1990].

² It should be noted that a number of other Australian nurses, for example, members of the Royal Australian Air Force Nursing Service, also served in South Vietnam.

³ Elizabeth A. Shields (ed). *Highlights in the History of the Army Nurse Corps*, U.S. Army Center of Military History, Washington, D.C., 1981, especially pp. 49-63.

⁴ The twelve nurses, to whom I am deeply indebted, are Margaret Fay Ahern (later Hopcraft), Nellie Jane Espie, Patricia Kay Ferguson (Gibbons), Elizabeth Ann Hall (Healey), Beryl Mary Elizabeth Hogarth, Diane Elizabeth Lawrence (Badcock), Pamela Ann Matthews (Barlow), Janice Christina Ann McCarthy, Terrie Elizabeth Roche (Ross), Shirley Joan Southwell, Janet Elizabeth Studholme, and Ann Christine Wright (Lee). Unless otherwise stated, quotations (some of which I have not attributed specifically for reasons of privacy) from these nurses are taken from their questionnaire answers, which are now in my possession.

⁵ J.C.A. McCarthy. “SVN Recollections”, unpublished notes, 1990, copy in my possession.

⁶ Information in this paragraph is taken from a letter from Lieutenant C. Gerrard, Directorate Nursing Services—Army (DNS-A), Canberra, 27 May 1989; telephone conversation, Nell Espie and Jan Bassett, 5 July 1990; Shields (ed). *Highlights.... op. cit.*: Dan Freedman & Jacqueline Rhoads (eds). *Nurses in Vietnam: The Forgotten Veterans*, Texas Monthly Press, Austin, 1987; and Kathryn Marshall. *In the Combat Zone: An Oral History of American Women in Vietnam*, Little, Brown and Company, Boston and Toronto, 1987, esp. pp. 4-7.

⁷ This percentage is derived from a table in Wray Vamplew (ed). *Australians: Historical Statistics*, Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, Sydney, 1987, pp. 8-9.

⁸ See Vamplew (ed). *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁹ It should be noted that the women could not do their nursing training in the RAANC.

¹⁰ Derived from information from DNS-A, Canberra, “Nominal Roll, RAANC ARA officers, 1951-1978”, and DNS-A, Canberra, “RAANC Officers posted to SVN”.

¹¹ Sara J. McVicker. “Invisible Veterans: The Women Who Served in Vietnam”, *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing*, 23:10, October 1985, pp. 13-19, quote from p. 14.

¹² McCarthy. “SVN Recollections”.

¹³ Information taken from Shields (ed). *Highlights, op. cit.*, pp. 62-63.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

¹⁵ Information from DNS-A, Canberra, “RAANC Officers posted to SVN”; and L. M. McGurgan. “A Brief on the RAANC Involvement in SVN”, paper presented at

DNS-A Conference, Portsea, Victoria, 1990, pp. 1-12. Leslie McGurgan, as Lieutenant L. M. Smith, served in South Vietnam with the RAANC from 29 April 1970 to 30 April 1971. She now holds the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel.

¹⁶ McGurgan. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹⁷ ALS, Nell Espie to Jan Bassett, no date [June 1990].

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ McGurgan. "A Brief", *op. cit.*, p. 6.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

²² Some RAANC nurses had contact with the 24th Evacuation Hospital. A brief nursing exchange programme involving 1 Australian Field Hospital and the 24th Evacuation Hospital was begun in late 1971.

²³ McCarthy. "SVN Recollections", *op. cit.*

²⁴ McGurgan. "A Brief", *op. cit.*, p. 8.

²⁵ McGurgan. "A Brief", *op. cit.*, p.7.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

²⁸ McCarthy. "SVN Recollections", *op. cit.*

²⁹ McGurgan. "A Brief", *op. cit.*, p. 4.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

³¹ McCarthy. "SVN Recollections", *op. cit.*

³² McGurgan. "A Brief", *op. cit.*, p.9.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ These figures are derived from information from DNS-A. Canberra, "Nominal roll, RAANC ARA Officers, 1951-1978"; nurses' questionnaires; and telephone conversation, Jan Bassett and Lieutenant-Colonel C. Gerrard, DNS-A, Canberra, 18 July 1990.

³⁵ McGurgan. "A Brief", *op. cit.*, p.10.

³⁶ On the American nurses see, for example, Claudia J. Dewane. "Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in Medical Personnel in Vietnam", *Hospital and Community Psychiatry*, 35:12, December 1984, pp. 1232-1234; and Robert H. Stretch, James D. Vail, & Joseph P. Maloney. "Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Among Army Nurse Corps Vietnam Veterans", *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 53:5, 1985, pp. 704-708.

³⁷ McGurgan. "A Brief", *op. cit.*, p. 11.

International Factors Influencing Australian Governments' Responses To The Indochinese Refugee Problem

James E. Coughlan

Introduction

The year 1975 was an important year for Australia: the economy had plunged into a severe recession, with high unemployment and interest rates, the worst since the 1930s depression; the Government was rocked by ministerial involvement in a major illegal international loans scandal; and a variety of other significant political disruptions, which culminated in the most serious constitutional crisis in Australian political history—the dismissal by the Governor-General, Queen Elizabeth's representative in Australia, of the elected Labor Prime Minister Gough Whitlam. There was one significant international event in 1975 which would have major political and social ramifications for Australia over the following decades: the revolutionary changes in the Cambodian, Lao and Vietnamese Governments.

The communist victories in the three countries which used to comprise French Indochina triggered two types of large-scale population movements: the forced deurbanization of Cambodia and government population relocation programmes in Vietnam on one hand, and the exodus of over two million Indochinese asylum seekers on the other. Although the magnitude of the exodus of Indochinese asylum seekers over the past decade and a half is smaller than some of the other contemporary refugee crises, its direct effect on the international community has been substantial, largely due to the influence of the United States Government. For Australia, the decision to admit almost 150,000 Indochinese refugees and immigrants in the decade and a half since early 1975 has had a significant direct and indirect impact on the social fabric of Australian society.

The aim of this article is to discuss some of the international factors which have contributed to Australia's Indochinese refugee policy formulation since early 1975, with only passing attention given to domestic considerations. The article also seeks to show that the overwhelming determinant of Australia's Indochinese refugee policy has not been domestic or humanitarian considerations, but rather the political desires of the Australian Government and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (the Australian equivalent of the US Department of State) to improve Australia's relations with Asia, especially with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries, Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and

Thailand. Thus, like the United States of America, Australia's recent refugee policy has been more of a foreign policy tool than an implement of Government humanitarian concern.

The following section will provide a short background to Australia's overall refugee policy, which will be followed by a discussion of the international factors which have contributed to Indochinese refugee policy formulation in the three Australian governments since the beginning of 1975. The final section presents a brief discussion and conclusion of the issues raised.

Background

Australia is a signatory to the 1951 *United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* and the 1967 *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, and thus accepts the definition of the term refugee encompassed in these United Nations instruments. However, in more recent times Australia, as well as other countries involved in Indochinese refugee resettlement and the southeast and east Asian countries, has narrowed its interpretation of the term refugee. At the same time, Australia is incorporating more stringent procedures in the determination of refugee status. This *modus operandi* has been adopted not only in order to separate the genuine political refugees from the economic migrants amongst the asylum seekers, but more importantly to justify publicly the rejection, and possible mandatory repatriation, of asylum seekers who, the Government determines, are non-refugees.

Australia's response to specific refugee situations takes into account such factors as the magnitude of the specific refugee problem, the region in which the problem occurs and the strength and nature of Australia's relationship with that region, with particular importance placed on the relationships with the country of origin and country of first asylum of the asylum seekers. As with the USA, Australia's refugee policy was until recently based upon ad hoc responses to specific refugee crises. After a considerable amount of domestic and international pressure in 1978 the Liberal Government of Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, introduced a regular refugee component into Australia's annual immigration programme. The formulation of a formalized refugee policy in the late 1970s was due to a number of factors, the most important of which was the growing number of refugee crises around the world and the increasing pressure placed on Australia by various governments and organisations to resettle refugees.

Australia is in a similar position, with regard to the Indochinese asylum seekers, to the other Asian countries, and unlike other Western countries, in that it is both a country of first asylum, that is a country where asylum seekers initially seek refuge, and a third country, that is a country of refugee resettlement. Australia commenced resettling Indochinese refugees in 1975, when slightly more than one thousand were resettled, though a substantial resettlement programme was not in

place until 1978, when over seven thousand were accepted. In late April 1976, almost a year after the communist take-over of Saigon, the first boat carrying Vietnamese asylum seekers arrived on Australia's northern shores, heralding what would be the arrival of over fifty boats of first asylum Vietnamese boat people during the following five years. In addition, since late 1989 three boats carrying Cambodian boat people have successfully landed on Australian shores. The unannounced arrival of Indochinese boat people on Australia's northern shores has been a significant factor in the creation of Australia's policy towards the Indochinese refugees.

As a final background issue, at the beginning of 1975, as part of the Colombo Plan of which Australia is a member, there were over five hundred Indochinese students sponsored by the Australian Government attending educational institutions in Australia. The majority of these students were from South Vietnam, but also included 19 students from North Vietnam and six high school students nominated by the Pathet Lao faction in Laos. The Labor Government under the Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, had established diplomatic relations with North Vietnam in 1973, and had actively worked to improve relations between Australia and North Vietnam. Following the changes of government in the three Indochinese countries in 1975 Australia continued to provide a small amount of developmental and humanitarian aid to Laos, although similar aid and cultural exchanges between Australia and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam were suspended in early 1979 following Vietnam's intervention in Cambodia, influenced by the perception that Vietnam was both profiting from and forcibly expelling Vietnamese boat people. However, since 1983 Australia has been involved in providing bilateral and multilateral humanitarian aid to Vietnam, and there have been a small number of cultural exchanges. Australian businesses have also been active in assisting Vietnam.

The Whitlam Government's Neglect: 1975

At the beginning of 1975 Australia maintained diplomatic relations with the four nation states of Indochina and was providing developmental aid to these countries. The diversification of Australia's relations with Asia, following the election of the Whitlam Government in late 1972, was part of Whitlam's belief that Australian foreign policy should not be restricted due to ideological and military considerations, but should also include cultural and economic facets, and that Australia should seek to expand its relations within the Asian region.

As part of the desire to restructure Australia's foreign relations, an important initiative of the Whitlam Government was the formal abolition of the White Australia Policy and the adoption of a policy of multiculturalism initiated by the Minister for Immigration, Mr Al Grassby. The White Australia Policy was the common name given to the *Immigration Restriction Act, 1901* which sought to restrict non Anglo-

celtic immigrants from entering Australia. The historical background to this Act is similar to that of comparable regulations enacted in Canada and the USA during the latter part of the nineteenth century. There were some provisions within the *Immigration Restriction Act, 1901* which permitted some Asian people to immigrate to Australia, though their numbers were very small.

Since the end of the Second World War there had been a growing awareness on the part of some Australians that Australia's restrictions on non Anglo-Celtic immigration were presenting a negative image of Australia internationally and hampering Australia's effectiveness in international forums. Upon its election the Whitlam Government moved rapidly to formally abolish the White Australia Policy, which resulted in a marginal increase in the proportion of Asian-born immigrants settling in Australia during the early years of government. However, the first significant test for the non-discriminatory nature of Australia's new immigration policy was to come with the first Indochinese refugee crisis of early 1975.

In the spring of 1975 Whitlam perceived that Australia was not in a position to accept Indochinese refugees, and was in essence unwilling to grant entry to Cambodian and even Vietnamese nationals with Australian connections. This perception arose due to a number of factors. The Labor Party in Australia at the time was more ideologically aligned with the North Vietnamese Government, as well as the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam, the Khmer Rouge and the Pathet Lao factions, than the American-backed regimes in Indochina. At the same time, some of those involved in the labour movement expressed concern at the possibility of having a large number of Vietnamese workers in Australia, which could threaten the level of wages of Australian workers, and thus the welfare of Australian society. The Government was concerned at a possible electoral backlash from both conservative forces in society and its own supporters if Indochinese evacuees and refugees were settled permanently in Australia.

During April 1975 the Australian Labor Government did not plan to follow the US example of extracting Cambodian and Vietnamese nationals who had connections with Australia or who were perceived as being at risk after the communist victories. The Whitlam Government, and especially some of its senior ministers, appeared concerned with two issues at this time: the desire not to offend North Vietnam by seeming to meddle in the internal affairs of South Vietnam through accepting Vietnamese nationals fleeing the advancing communist forces; and concern at permitting the entry of a large number of conservative South Vietnamese who it was felt might seek to disrupt Australia's relations with North Vietnam. By the time the communist forces had entered Saigon less than a hundred Vietnamese nationals had arrived in Australia from Vietnam under special consideration. Up to the end of April 1975 the Whitlam Government's inaction in getting the remaining

families of Vietnamese already in Australia out of South Vietnam, prior to the communist take over, brought it substantial criticism from the opposition political parties, humanitarian organisations, some academics and the general community.

After the communist forces entered Saigon the Whitlam Government experienced a substantial amount of condemnation, both domestically and internationally, directed at its lack of response in bringing out South Vietnamese nationals with Australian connections. The Whitlam Government had incorrectly interpreted the general feeling of the population towards the situation of the Vietnamese in Australia, and underestimated the international criticisms it would be subject to. Australia soon came under pressure from the United States and the ASEAN countries, especially Malaysia and Singapore, to participate in resettling some of the 130,000 American-assisted evacuees and refugees who had fled Cambodia and Vietnam. As a result of this pressure, two immigration officials were sent to Guam, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore to interview evacuees and refugees for entry to Australia. At the end of this exercise in mid-1975 just over one thousand Vietnamese were selected for entry into Australia. This token response was not received enthusiastically both domestically and internationally, and was viewed by some Asian countries as an indication that the White Australia Policy was not dead and buried as the Whitlam Government had announced, while in certain domestic quarters it added to the growing public discontent with the Whitlam Government. However, the domestic political situation within Australia was about to change and by the end of 1975 the Whitlam Government had been sacked by the Governor-General, Sir John Kerr, and a new conservative (Liberal) Government under Malcolm Fraser had been elected.

In summary, the position of the Whitlam Government towards the Indochinese evacuees and refugees in early 1975 was that it did not wish to offend and damage relations with, the newly victorious government of North Vietnam. However, after a significant amount of domestic and international pressure, mainly from the ASEAN countries and the United States, the Government acquiesced and accepted a token number of Indochinese evacuees and refugees. The policy towards the Indochinese refugees during 1975 was initially determined by some powerful members of the Whitlam Government, who largely ignored the requests of domestic and international pressure groups. The views of some other Government members who thought that Australia should do something to assist the evacuees and refugees were largely ignored.

The Fraser Government's Initiatives: 1976—1983

The first concerted attempt to develop a refugee policy within the framework of overall immigration policy came in 1977 under the Fraser Government at the instigation of the then Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, Michael MacKellar. In the formulation of an Indochinese

refugee policy the task at hand was to balance various domestic and international considerations, while at the same time attempting to project to the international community, especially the Asian region, the image of Australia as a responsible member of the Asian-Pacific community. The Fraser Government, like the Whitlam Government before it, recognised the importance of developing more substantial relations with Australia's Asian neighbours.

During the late 1970s an important feature of the development of refugee policy within the overall immigration programme was the formal structural incorporation of the then Department of Foreign Affairs, now the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, into refugee policy formulation. Though the Department of Foreign Affairs had had input into Australia's ad hoc refugee policy determination previously, there was no particular section within the Department which had responsibility for this matter. As an aside, it is important to note that since the onset of the Indochinese refugee phenomenon the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has consistently recommended a higher intake of Indochinese refugees than the Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade believed that if Australia resettled a large number of Indochinese refugees, then it followed that Australia would be perceived as being a responsible member of the Asian region, and this perception in turn could be used as a tool by Australia to improve its regional relations with the Asian countries, especially the ASEAN countries, and, probably most importantly, Indonesia. As a result of the perceived importance of the Indochinese refugees in Australia's bilateral and multilateral relations, a "refugee section" was established in the Department of Foreign Affairs in early 1981.

In addition to raising Australia's status and prestige within the Asian region, another matter which also prompted the Australian Government to take a more active role in the Indochinese refugee issue was the arrival of just over two thousand Vietnamese boat people in 51 boats on Australia's northern shores during 1976-1981, the largest proportion arriving between 1978-1979. The arrival of these refugees sparked a heated debate in Australia, and in some quarters old fears of an Asian invasion of Australia resurfaced. The Government was concerned with these unannounced arrivals for two reasons: fear of the domestic political backlash if increasing numbers of boat people were to arrive unannounced in Australia, and the problem posed by genuine refugees who would have to be resettled by Australia, although they would not have been selected via normal migration procedures. The latter issue was of concern to the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs as Australia normally accepts the majority of its immigrants before they enter Australia; in selecting refugees outside of Australia immigration officials had the ability to select refugees who, they thought, would be able to integrate successfully into Australian society. This power of

selection was not available in the case of genuine refugees who landed in Australia without prior selection, and thus the element of controlled selection was absent.

As a result of the unannounced arrival of Vietnamese boat people on Australia's northern shores, the Government made special advances to the Indonesian Government in an effort to persuade the Indonesians to hold any Vietnamese boat people who wanted to travel on to Australia. If this request was met, Australia promised to take a greater number of Vietnamese boat people from Indonesian camps. Similar advances were made to the Malaysian Government, and in mid-1978 the Australian Government approached the US Government and requested their assistance in persuading the Indonesian and Malaysian Governments to stop boats of Vietnamese refugees planning to go to Australia, in return for Australia taking more refugees from Indonesian and Malaysian refugee camps. This action would thus help the United States resettle Indochinese refugees, while at the same time reducing the number of refugees in Indonesia and Malaysia, but most importantly it would permit Australian immigration officials the opportunity to select the refugees Australia wanted to resettle. In early 1979 when the Indonesian Government offered two islands as possible sites for an Indochinese refugee processing centre, the Australian Government was immediately supportive of this proposal and offered to meet part of the cost of establishing such a centre.

The Australian position in 1978-80 was essentially to try to stop Vietnamese boat people from coming directly to Australia by accepting a large proportion of its Indochinese refugee intake from the countries from where the Vietnamese boat people would most likely attempt to continue their journey to Australia, *viz.* Indonesia and Malaysia. During the late 1970s and early 1980s when the refugee camp populations in Indonesia and Malaysia were declining, and those in Hong Kong and Thailand increasing, Australia continued to take the majority of its refugees from Indonesia and Malaysia, with most of the intake from the other Asian countries consisting only of those refugees who had immediate family members in Australia who were in a position to sponsor them out of the refugee camps.

During the late 1970s, despite what it perceived as its adequate response to the growing Indochinese refugee crisis, the Fraser Government came under increasing international pressure from the first asylum ASEAN countries, as well as the USA and the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), to resettle more of the growing number of Indochinese asylum seekers arriving in Asian first asylum countries. On the domestic scene, the growing media coverage of the plight of the Vietnamese boat people and the horrific images of emaciated Cambodians entering Thailand raised public consciousness and sympathy, thus permitting the Government, now also under increasing domestic pressure, to raise more readily its intake quota of Indochinese refugees.

Also in the late 1970s the Vietnamese boat people situation changed markedly with the arrival of a number of large freighters in Asia with thousands of Vietnamese asylum seekers aboard. It soon became apparent that the majority of people on these freighters had paid the local equivalent of thousands of dollars to leave Vietnam, and that their departure from Vietnam had been arranged with the assistance of corrupt Vietnamese Government officials. With the growing number of Vietnamese asylum seekers arriving on the shores of Asian countries the Australian Government, mirroring the US Government, announced in early 1982 that it would examine each asylum seeker's claim for refugee status on a case-by-case basis, rather than giving refugee status to all Indochinese asylum seekers. Shortly after the arrival of the large freighters in southeast Asia a new term began to be bandied around—the "economic refugee". At this time for many resettlement countries it became fairly clear that a sizable proportion of Indochinese asylum seekers, especially amongst the Vietnamese boat people, had fled their countries for economic rather than political reasons, and thus were at best economic, rather than political, refugees.

Also in 1982 the Australian Government took the first immigrants from Vietnam under the Orderly Departure Programme (ODP) which was initiated in 1979 following negotiations between the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the UNHCR. Unlike in the United States, all Vietnamese leaving Vietnam under this programme, which in Australia is now termed the "Vietnamese Family Migration Programme", entered Australia as immigrants and not as refugees. The almost three year delay between the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the UNHCR and the Vietnamese Government, and the first arrival in Australia of emigrants from Vietnam under the ODP was due to the finalisation of procedural matters. However, it should be noted that between 1976 and 1982 several hundred Vietnamese nationals were able to emigrate from Vietnam to Australia under normal migration channels, although it should be noted also that the majority of these people had been given entry visas to Australia prior to 30 April 1975.

During the late 1970s under the Fraser Government, Australia's principal goals with respect to the Indochinese asylum seekers were: firstly to improve Australia's image internationally, especially with the ASEAN countries; and secondly, to act to prevent adverse domestic opinion which arose each time Vietnamese boat people arrived unannounced on Australian shores. When reports began to emerge in the late 1970s that boats carrying Vietnamese refugees had been pushed off from the shores of some of the ASEAN countries, the Australian Government did not publicly condemn these actions as strongly as did other Western governments, and indicated that the problem was with the Vietnamese Government, and that the international community should be more understanding of the difficult position of the developing ASEAN countries. Such action on the part of the Fraser Government was

to indicate its condemnation of the Vietnamese Government and support of ASEAN's position on the boat people, which would assist in improving Australia's relations with the nations of the region. The adoption of this position was to ensure also that Vietnamese boat people would be prevented from arriving in Australia unannounced, and would ensure that the Fraser Government acquired both domestic and international benefit. The Fraser Government took account of both domestic and international factors in determining its Indochinese refugee policies, while at the same time approaching the issue with some semblance of humanitarianism.

The Hawke Government's Disengagement: 1983-1990

By the mid-1980s the world's attention had drifted away from the plight of the Vietnamese boat people and the Cambodian refugees along the Thailand-Cambodia border. The world's media had not bothered about the situation of the Lao and Hmong refugees in Thailand. America's war in Laos has been labelled a "secret war" and thus very few people in the West knew about the existence of Laos or America's military involvement there in the early 1960s. At the same time, the principal Indochinese refugee resettlement countries of Australia, Canada, France and the USA began to experience what has become known as compassion fatigue, their desire to resettle enthusiastically, an apparently never ending stream of Indochinese asylum seekers, especially Vietnamese boat people, waned significantly. This decreased enthusiasm may be measured by a gradual decline in each country's Indochinese refugee quota or ceiling. Australia was not an exception to the gradual disengagement of resettling Indochinese refugees. However, through its then Minister for Foreign Affairs, and now Governor-General, Bill Hayden, Australia strongly sought a diplomatic solution to the conflict in Cambodia, which was perceived as an important first step in the resolution of the Indochinese refugee problem. Indeed, from the late 1970s to the mid 1980s the situation of the Indochinese refugees had moved from a crisis to a problem that refused to go away.

In its desire to play a leading active role in seeking a settlement to the Cambodian problem, and in an effort to obtain substantial regional support for its initiatives, Australia accepted fewer Indochinese refugees, but the proportional decrease in the Australian intake was not as high as that of the other principal resettlement countries. A policy of gradual disengagement was implemented in order to use the Indochinese refugee issue in discussions on the Cambodian situation with the ASEAN countries. In an effort to be in a favourable position to take the initiative in the resolution of the Cambodian problem the newly elected Labor Government, under Prime Minister Robert Hawke, decided in 1983, under a recommendation of the Department of Foreign Affairs, to resettle a greater proportion of Indochinese refugees from Thailand, where the majority of the Indochinese refugees were to be found.

Another of the Hawke Government's principal foreign policy objectives was to substantially improve relations with Vietnam, while at the same time strengthening relations with the other Asian countries. Both of these objectives were achieved over the following seven years, though it is important to note that Australia's initiatives towards both improving relations with Vietnam and seeking a solution to the Cambodian conflict, somewhat damaged relations with the ASEAN countries, especially during 1984-1986. Another damaging issue was what has come to be called the Asian Immigration Debate, or, the Blainey Debate, so-called after the Melbourne University historian, Professor Geoffrey Blainey, who initiated the debate in March 1984.

The very emotional, public Asian Immigration Debate was essentially about the perceived high level of Asian immigration to Australia. During most of the 1980s about 35-40 per cent of Australia's annual immigrant intake was comprised of Asian-born immigrants, a level which some Australians perceived as being too high. One of the international repercussions of this debate, which was widely reported in the Asian media, was that Australia was again being perceived as a racist country, and the notion of the officially defunct White Australia Policy was mentioned occasionally in the Asian media. The debate on the level of Asian immigration has waxed and waned since 1984, though the damage done to Australia's image in Asia was perceived to be substantial enough to warrant action. One initiative taken was to maintain the intake of Indochinese refugees at a reasonable level, while concurrently not changing immigration policy in effect to decrease the overall level of Asian immigration to Australia. Such action was perceived by the Government as demonstrating to Asian countries that Australia was not racist, and was still willing to resettle Indochinese refugees at a fairly constant level at a time when other resettlement countries were reducing their intake of Indochinese refugees. This action together with Australia's reaching a consensus with the ASEAN countries on the Cambodia conflict assisted in Australia regaining its influence in the ASEAN region, indicating as they did that its initiatives on the Cambodian conflict were for the benefit of the Asian region and demonstrating that Australia was not a racist country.

Partly as a result of the Asian Immigration Debate and other domestic factors a non Government committee was convened in late 1987 to report to the Government on future directions for Australia's immigration policies. The Committee to Advise on Australia's Immigration Policies, which was chaired by Dr Stephen Fitzgerald, Australia's first ambassador to the People's Republic of China and an internationally renowned Sinologist, reported to the Government in mid-1988. One of the reports recommendations was that Australia should gradually disengage itself from Indochinese refugee resettlement. This recommendation appears to have derived from a negative image of Indochinese, especially Vietnamese, refugees in Australia and a growing

opposition to ongoing Indochinese refugee resettlement within the Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs. However, the Hawke Government was quick to indicate that it would not follow this recommendation, a decision which was taken in response to substantial pressure from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

During the late 1980s Australia began working very closely with the ASEAN countries on a solution to the Cambodia conflict. Associated with a resolution of this conflict was the Indochinese asylum seekers issue. By early 1989 Australia had essentially reached a consensus with the ASEAN countries both on the method of resolving the Cambodian conflict and the problem of the Indochinese asylum seekers. During 1989-1990 Australia continued to liaise closely with the ASEAN countries on the resolution of the Cambodian conflict. At the July 1989 Geneva conference on Indochinese asylum seekers Australia, with the ASEAN countries, voted "for" the mandatory repatriation of Vietnamese asylum seekers, opposing the Governments of the United States, the Soviet Union and Vietnam. During subsequent international meetings on the issue of the Indochinese asylum seekers, Australia and the ASEAN countries continued to oppose the United States on the issue of mandatory repatriation of Vietnamese asylum seekers.

An important outcome of the July 1989 Geneva conference was that Australia committed itself to resettling 11,000 long-term Vietnamese boat people during 1989-1992. This initiative came from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, not the Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs. While this decision obviously pleased the ASEAN countries, as well as Hong Kong, not all sections of the Vietnamese community, and some of those involved with resettling Indochinese refugees, are pleased with this decision. Currently most of those providing services to the Indochinese communities have severely over-burdened work loads, and the prospect of settling 11,000 long-term refugees, the majority of whom have been in camps for over five years and do not have relatives in Australia, is daunting.

In late 1989 a new problem appeared on the horizon of Australia's Indochinese refugee programme; a boat load of Cambodian asylum seekers landed on Australian shores, and by mid-1990 two additional boatloads had arrived. Australia was quick to dispatch envoys to Indonesia in an attempt to persuade the Indonesian Government to hold any Cambodian boat people who sought asylum in Australia. With an increasing number of Cambodian and Vietnamese boat people arriving on Indonesian shores, many of whom have been pushed off from Malaysia, and a decreasing number of refugees being resettled in third countries, there is little incentive for the Indonesian Government to hold Indochinese boat people headed for Australia, as it has done in the past. At present, there are also strong indications that Australia will stop accepting refugees from Laos (as of September 1990). Australia's decision to resettle 11,000 long-term Vietnamese boat people during 1989-1992 may end up causing more problems than it solves for the Government.

Since the Hawke Government came to office in 1983 Australia's policy on the Indochinese asylum seekers has been very closely associated with the desire to find a solution to the Cambodian conflict and improve relations with Asia, especially the newly industrialising ASEAN countries. Despite growing domestic opposition to resettling more Indochinese refugees, both on the part of the public and from within some Government departments, Australia's annual intake of Indochinese refugees has remained around 6-7,000 persons per annum for most of the life of the Hawke Government. During this time, international political considerations have been the paramount driving force behind Australia's Indochinese refugee policy, with domestic and humanitarian factors being seemingly less important over time.

Discussion and Conclusion

The changes in Australia's Indochinese refugee policy since early 1975 have been influenced by a variety of international and domestic political considerations. On the domestic side such factors as community attitudes to the acceptance of the Indochinese refugees, the general economic situation and various public debates relating to immigration in general, and since 1984 Asian immigration in particular, have been of concern. Internationally, Australia's response to the Indochinese refugee problem has been based on developments in the three Indochinese countries, the refugee situation in the Asian countries of first asylum, the attitudes of the other principal Indochinese refugee resettlement countries, especially Canada and the USA and the subsequent pressure placed on the Australian Government by the Governments of the US and the ASEAN countries. Since the mid-1980s the perceived damage done to Australia's reputation in Asia as result of the widely reported Asian immigration debates in the Asian media has also been a factor for consideration. Thus the determination of Australia's Indochinese refugee policy has had to take into account a complex, and at times contradictory, set of international and domestic considerations, often with the strength of the international factors out-weighting the politically sensitive and potentially damaging domestic considerations. Indeed, it may be said that there were times when the Australian Government's Indochinese refugee policy was in direct confrontation with domestic political considerations. At the same time, Australia's policy towards the Indochinese refugees, especially the Vietnamese boat people, has been diametrically opposed to Australia's refugee philosophy and other aspects of the government's overall immigration policies.

Australia's apparent reluctance to take Cambodian, Hmong and Lao refugees extended from a belief that the majority of these refugees were of rural or unskilled backgrounds, and thus would find it nearly impossible to integrate into industrial and post-industrial Australian society. Those refugees from Cambodia and Laos who would have been suited for resettlement in Australia, that is the educated and the skilled, were perceived as probably having a knowledge of French rather than

English, and thus would be more suitable for resettlement in Canada or France. There was a perception also that the majority of the Vietnamese boat people were from the urban localities in southern Vietnam, and thus would be able to integrate readily into Australian society. It was also the opinion of some policy makers that refugees from Cambodia and Laos would be willing to return to their homelands once the economic and political situations in these countries stabilised. Not only was this position all too vague, but it also exhibited a lack of understanding of the complex socio-historical situations in these two countries, especially with respect to Laos.

The country of origin of the refugees to be selected was the subject of discussions, as well as strong disagreements, between the Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The acceptance of many of the Cambodian refugees in the early to mid-1980s appears to be a victory for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, as the Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs perceived that the Cambodians, as well as the Lao, were largely unintegratable due to their poor level of human capital. From an economic perspective these perceptions were to be proven wrong, as data from the 1986 Australian Census of Population and Housing indicated that Lao-Australians were the most economically successful of the Indochinese refugee communities, with the Cambodian-Australians only marginally less successful than the Vietnamese-Australians.

The decision to select Indochinese refugees from specific first asylum countries was determined by a complex set of economic, geopolitical and historical factors, foreign governmental pressure and perceptions of which refugees would most readily integrate into Australian society. Under international pressure in the mid-1970s, primarily from the UNHCR and the US Government, Australia accepted the majority of its Indochinese refugees from Thailand. With the commencement of the major exodus of Vietnamese boat people in 1978 Australia started taking a large number of refugees from Malaysia, again mainly due to international pressure and Australia's historical Commonwealth and military links with Malaysia. After a number of Vietnamese boats arrived on Australian shores in 1978-79 a significant proportion of the Indochinese refugee intake came from Indonesia. In the early 1980s, as international pressure mounted to assist the resettlement of the growing number of Cambodian refugees, Australia again redirected part of its attention to Thailand, though Indonesia and Malaysia remained the main source of Indochinese refugees. These three countries were to continue through the 1980s as being the main source of Indochinese refugees for Australia. From the beginning of 1990 about 37 per cent of the Indochinese refugees resettled in Australia came from Malaysia, 30 per cent from Thailand (of which about one-third were Vietnamese), 16 per cent from Indonesia, six per cent from Hong Kong and four per cent from the Philippines.

In the early 1980s Australia came under some criticism for only taking the cream of the refugees and rejecting the elderly and uneducated. Indeed this practice had been going on since the late 1970s, and for a short period during 1978-79 some Australian immigration officers working in Malaysia deliberately split families in order to select young single females for entry to Australia. After increasing criticism of Australia's acceptance procedures from some first asylum governments and Australian community groups actively involved in the resettlement of Indochinese refugees, the Government decided that a small proportion of the refugees to be resettled would be difficult to settle cases. However, the majority of these difficult to settle cases had family members in Australia who were able to assist with their resettlement.

In conclusion, the main driving force behind Australia's policy towards the Indochinese refugees over the past decade and a half has been international political considerations, especially based on the relations between the Australian Government and the ASEAN countries. However, the main factor limiting the level of Australia's response to the Indochinese refugee problem was domestic political considerations, especially the potential domestic political backlash if too many refugees were accepted. Only in a few instances have genuine humanitarian considerations come into play. This is highlighted even more when one considers the recent decision to accept 11,000 Vietnamese long-stayers from Asian refugee camps, at a time when domestic resettlement resources can just cope with those resettled in Australia, and when Australian unemployment is increasing and unemployment within the Vietnamese-born community is in the order of 30-35 per cent.

'The Funny Place': Australian Literature and the War in Vietnam.

Peter Pierce

Men who fought in the Australian and American forces in the Vietnam War were never persuaded for long of a good reason why they were there. Most, however, soon found others who experienced enough to tell them where they were. In *Nasho* (1984),¹ a novel by the Australian conscript Michael Frazer (who did not see service in Vietnam), it is quickly explained to the protagonist, Turner, a journalist with the supposed Army Information Corps, that,

It's not called the funny place because Bob Hope does a concert there every year. It's really a strange war. It's a politicians' war, not a soldiers' war. If the Americans declared war on the Antarctic penguins, Australia would have a battalion there.

The explanation of the *why*, of the causes of Australian and American involvement in the war, is nihilistic and despairing. This is a war that soldiers must fight but whose objectives are in no way under their control. Australians felt such impotence the more strongly, as the last sentence of Frazer's extract suggests, because American diplomatic and military initiatives apparently dictated and circumscribed their freedom of action.

For some Australian novelists, several of whom—including John Rowe, Rhys Pollard, William Nagle and 'David Alexander' (Lex McAulay)—had seen active service, the causes of the war may have been the righteously proclaimed ones of anti-communism and of the defence of (South) Vietnamese national self-determination. All of them certainly believed with a sardonicism which strayed towards bitterness that these ideological aims were fatally compromised by the strategic dependence of Australian troops upon an inferior American military command structure, by the unreliability of the South Vietnamese allies, by the difficulty of distinguishing friend from foe in the field and by the increasing hostility to the war on the home front. Australian novelists of the Vietnam War have tended to be unofficial if not unwitting spokesmen of the views of servicemen. In consequence they have depicted anti-war protestors unsympathetically. For a character in Pollard's *The Cream Machine* (1972)² they are "smug bastards". In Nagle's novel *The Odd Angry Shot* (1975)³ they are "long-haired bastards". Such attitudes were not peculiar to Australia, nor was the sense of the abandonment of troops in Vietnam by authorities at home. Thus these serving men would be assisted in the characterisation of themselves, in Jeffrey Walsh's analysis,⁴ as the latest of a series of lost generations of soldiers.

Abandoned, it might seem, by the society and culture from which they had come, and therefore to a degree estranged from the Anzac military tradition that had been a long agreed piety of Australian life,⁵ Australian soldiers (as they spoke in memoirs, or were spoken for in fiction) made confused, prejudiced, partial efforts to discover what place it was that they had come to in Vietnam. This “funny place”, of whose existence there had been scant political, let alone public awareness when members of an Australian Army Training Team first went there in 1962,⁶ has figured fitfully but significantly in Australian literature over the last two decades. The most important of its representations have been, in neither chronological nor hierarchical order: first, as the site of a war which although initially it appeared likely to replicate the jungle conflicts in which Australia had taken part in the Pacific during the Second World War, from early on refused to do so. Vietnam proved to be morally as well as militarily recalcitrant and ambiguous—a lost cause, for all the recent refurbishing of the historical record both by Australian politicians and by Vietnam veterans: groups who are in most other respects mutually antagonistic.

Second, Vietnam and the Vietnamese, however imperfectly understood by combatants or commentators, became the latest filter of the mingled fear and desire that has characterised Australian xenophobia, especially towards Asians, for a century and a half. This attitude has been evident since Chinese immigration to the New South Wales and Victorian goldfields in the 1850s. While focussed again on the Japanese in the 1930s and 1940s, it has been in most decades a generalised apprehensiveness towards “Asians”, especially when they could be called communists as well. The significant shift of bearing that occurred in some writing about the Vietnam War was that while the Viet Cong, the NVA and their civilian sympathisers joined the pantheon of enemies of Australia whom the culture has needed and thus identified,⁷ some of the people of this scantily known Asian country were anxiously sought out as potential mentor figures for Australians.

Less often than in post-Vietnam War literature written in America, has “Vietnam” become for the characters imagined by Australian authors (as distinct, perhaps, from elements of the veteran population) a vague, all-encompassing, exculpatory metaphor for the subsequent mess made of their civilian lives. In Australian literature that treats, even tangentially, of the Vietnam War, there have yet been few returned servicemen (as Australian “veterans” were long styled before the American term began to be adopted in the late 1970s) among its protagonists. A sociopath called Graham turns up in David Williamson’s play *Jugglers Three* (1972);⁸ “The Yanks had their grass and heroin, but we saw it through on Fosters”; Michael Hackett, a payroll robber and murderer (significantly seeking revenge against his plutocrat father) in C.J. Cairncross’ novel *The Unforgiven* (1977).⁹ By analogy, the plight of the psychologically and physically damaged veterans was examined through

the reception of a Gallipoli veteran when he comes back to a country town in Australia in the film *Break of Day* (1976).

Frequently Vietnam was depicted by indirect means in the Australian poetry and fiction that has been written since the mid-1960s. A score of novels, including Christopher Koch's *Across the Sea Wall* (1965)¹⁰ and *The Year of Living Dangerously* (1978);¹¹ Richard Beilby's *The Bitter Lotus* (1978);¹² Robert Drewe's *A Cry in the Jungle Bar* (1979);¹³ Bruce Grant's *Cherry Bloom* (1980);¹⁴ Blanche D'Alpuget's *Monkeys in the Dark* (1980)¹⁵ and *Turtle Beach* (1981);¹⁶ Ian Moffitt's *The Retreat of Radiance* (1982),¹⁷ were set in Asian countries other than Vietnam. Australian protagonists of Sri Lanka, Singapore, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, were more peaceful, but no less mystifying, than that of their counterparts in the war fiction.

Beginning in the 1970s, a second wave of literature of the Great War, one that particularly focussed upon the Gallipoli landings of 1915, appeared in Australia. The divisions on the homefront during that war, notably over the issue of conscription for overseas service (referenda on this issue were defeated narrowly in 1916 and 1917), the moral ambivalence of "the war to end war" (a conflict whose war aims, as A.J.P. Taylor has suggested, had to be invented after the fact), the fissures which the war made in Australian society and its presumed, and mythic role in putting an end to national innocence, could all be made to appear as premonitions of Vietnam.

The Vietnam War also figures in Australian literature as a speedily forgotten place, beneficiary of an Australian propensity towards historical amnesia (though Gore Vidal has ironically saluted his country as "Amnesia the Beautiful").¹⁸ Finally, "the funny place" is a site of various, though not essentially contesting Australian myths, none of which is new. All had earlier been shaped from the experience of other wars in which Australians had fought. Notable among them were the myth of a hostile homefront, the myth of incompetent allies (an old story this, that apparently stands endless retelling in bar-rooms and in books: witness *British Butchers and Bunglers of World War One* (1988),¹⁹ a "study" of generalship by the expatriate Australian John Laffin), the myth of "the legend of Anzac upheld"—that phrase being the plaintively, defensively revealing sub-title of Lex McAulay's account of *The Battle of Long Tan* (1986).²⁰

Army training films and still black and white photographs of Australian troops in Vietnam which were made and taken during the 1960s—admittedly in the early years of Australian involvement and therefore imbued with the expectation that victory would be the inevitable result of the job being done—concentrate on the beneficent interaction of the military with Vietnamese civilians. The kindly dentist is a ubiquitous presence. In addition these visual images often offer, consciously or not, a stereotypical profile and posture of the Australian Digger. Moving through a jungle landscape, leading with their clean-

shaven, craggy jaws, the Diggers are pictured so as nostalgically to recall the generation of their fathers who fought against the Japanese. The different enemy, the novel social and topographical contours of Vietnam, are wished away as the visual images return us to that Second World War whose occasion seemed blessedly unambiguous. That such throwbacks, fighters from an older war, could not continue to press on straightforwardly through the jungle to victory in Vietnam was one of the ugliest shocks that "the funny place" delivered. It ought not to have been, but lessons from Korea and the Malayan Emergency had not been well learned.

Some authors refused to concede that Vietnam might confound the glorious traditions of Australian soldiership, or saw betrayal of Anzac traditions from without as essential to the national military experience in Vietnam. Notable among them was Lex McAulay, who did three tours of duty in Vietnam, and who wrote his novel *When the Buffalo Fight* (1980),²¹ set in 1966, a more sanguine time for America and its allies in the war, under the pseudonym 'David Alexander'. The book's title comes from what 'Alexander' describes, in terms that Edward Said would savour, as "an old Asian saying": "when the buffalo fight, the small animals are trampled".

McAulay endeavours to portray the ostensible enemy, the Viet Cong, as worthy opponents of the Australians, although he reduces their ideological position to cartoon: "Hoa has laid down his life for the Revolution", one cadre declares. The Vietnamese peasantry are nameless and innocent victims of the war, but the veritable losers that the novel depicts are the Australian servicemen and their families at home. The latter are preyed upon by night-slinking "creatures", that is, anti-war protestors. Serving men suffer from the ministrations of opportunistic Australian politicians, the military ineptitude of the Americans and the "indolent", "somnolent", "lounging" soldiers of the ARVN. As he locates enemies of Australian life and military honour all around, writes from a position of frustrated, raging embattlement, McAulay as 'Alexander' (the pseudonym drawn perhaps from a general who might have been ruthless enough to win the war) is true to the melodramatic temper of the national literature, especially when its precious, reassuring moral and mythic verities are jeopardised. Australian war literature in particular highlights a need for enemies, for conflict that will guarantee enlistment in history, together with a contradictory desire to be left in an unthreatened world of dream, or delusion.

Writing his battle history of Long Tan, McAulay even-handedly dedicated it to "the young men of both sides who fought that day". Trenchantly, he gave as his sub-title "The Legend of Anzac Upheld". Some of the admittedly few Australian novelists who'd come previously to write of the war in Vietnam were more uncertain of the place that it held in Australian military traditions. In *The Cream Machine*, Pollard's narrator seems uncertain of whether his stance towards such traditions is or should be ironic:

Looking along the row of slouch hats and rifles I grope for the supposed similarity between us and the traditional national image: where are all the tall bronzed Anzacs? the once-famed Diggers who stormed the ragged impossibility of Anzac Cove or died jeeringly in the mud beneath Mont St Quentin? Where is the morale and endurance of Tobruk or the Kokoda Trail, the dash and inevitability of Kapyong? Perhaps it lies in the unscripted element?

That is, in this conclusion, where it always used to be: in volunteer and regular armed forces. Certainly the young soldier is not contemptuous of “the tall bronzed” figures of Anzac legend. But where can they be found in Vietnam? What proper names will that war add to the Australian military honour roll?

Pollard’s novel fits a pattern of story that C.D.B. Bryan, a US veteran of Vietnam turned novelist, described as peculiar to this war: “The Generic Vietnam War Narrative”²² Bryan summarises the predictable, devastating succession of incidents that such narratives treat, whether they are cast as novels or as memoirs: “There is the first patrol ... There is the atrocity scene, to demonstrate that My Lai was not an isolated incident ... There are dope scenes ... There is R and R in Saigon with Susie the bar-girl”. Bryan concludes that the generic narrative of the war “charts the gradual deterioration of order, the disintegration of idealism, the breakdown of character, the alienation from those at home, and finally, the loss of all sensibility save the will to survive”. It’s a somewhat unsympathetic aesthetic complaint made earlier the same year by Michiko Kakutani in the *New York Review of Books*: “In novel after novel, a variation of the following true to life sequence occurs . . .”.²³

While he has traced a pattern that fits Australian as well as American Vietnam War narratives, Bryan is blind to his own intuition of how characters and their authors suffer entrapment. They can find no optimistic way in moral terms, or metaphorical way in literary terms out of these narratives, hence back to the relative and supposed simplicities of stories of the Second World War. Not for nothing is John Wayne—celluloid hero of many theatres of that conflict—a presiding, if sardonically regarded presence in “Generic Vietnam War Narrative”.

The Cream Machine conforms to the pattern that Bryan sketches. Commencing with the narrator’s departure from Australia, it introduces his comrades-in-arms; has intimations of the domestic life which he has left behind; continues with the ritual induction of the young man to war. He is posted to battalion, meets its men, hears its legends, learns the necessary acronyms. Some Australian novels of Vietnam, in common with many from America, come with glossaries. The first patrol, the first corpse, the first matter of conscience routinely follow. In *The Cream Machine*, the latter involves the arrest of an old Vietnamese woman,

while in the testimony of one of the "Australian Voices" which are gathered in Stuart Rintoul's collection of oral testimonies, almost all by grieving and damaged veterans, *Ashes of Vietnam* (1987)²⁴ it would be an accidental atrocity. The narrative design of Pollard's novel is substantially repeated in William Nagle's *The Odd Angry Shot*, which opens with embarkation for Vietnam and proceeds speedily with the conventional sequence of first things: Vietnamese corpses, an Australian casualty, the purchase of "Saigon tea". The indispensable moment in such sequences is the first sight of a combat victim, whose body is the talisman that unlocks the right to report.

But what is there to report? No clear-cut ideological victory to complement the military one that never happened was available in Vietnam as it had seemed sometimes to be from the Second World War. Seemed, at least, in the accounts of their war by the fathers of Vietnam veterans, stories that are often derisively included, particularly in fiction by Americans. In that earlier conflict, the Japanese enemies portrayed in Australian fiction had occasioned no remorse of conscience. They were characterised as "apes with pants on" and "little, grinning, mustard-coloured Japanese" in Norman Bartlett's *Island Victory* (1955),²⁵ while for Ron Fisher, hero of 'David Forrest's' *The Last Blue Sea* (1959),²⁶ "From the dark ages they came". The "nigels", "nogs", "slope heads" routinely despised in *The Odd Angry Shot* indicate at least the characters' fealty to that Australian tradition of racial contempt and fear. Much other evidence is, however, contradictory and complicating.

For many Australian poets of the war, the true enemy was not Vietnamese at all. When Vietnamese people appeared they were almost always civilians, arrayed as the victims of Australian and American atrocities. Poets sought empathy with them. David Campbell, for instance, made a stagey entrance into the heart and mind of a peasant whose buffalo has been shot by Americans. The poem's focus at once shifted to blame the perpetrators, whose brutal, childish voices are overheard. Such a polemical positioning of himself against the war must have been more difficult for Campbell, who had served with distinction in the Royal Australian Air Force during the Second World War, than for the many well-intentioned, incapable protest poets whose work (along with that of established, skilled, and usually older poets) was gathered in such places as the anthology *We Took Their Orders and Are Dead* (1971),²⁷ edited by Shirley Cass and Michael Wilding. In the history of Australian poetry of and since the Vietnam period, Campbell's case was uncommon, for few other careers were as notably affected in Australia, especially by comparison with the changes wrought in the work of American poets such as Denise Levertov and Robert Bly.

Australian poetry of the Vietnam War, then, is marked by strident anti-Americanism and its corollary: a lament for Australian dependence. While poets often rushed to empathise with the Vietnamese, it was the people, rather than individuals, who were the targets of their

embrace. The desired relationship in some Australian novels was revealingly different. In *The Wine of God's Anger* (1968),²⁸ a portentously titled book by the competent journeyman Kenneth Cook, the protagonist who has volunteered to save the world from communism believes at first that his enemy is this alien ideology. In the climactic battle against the Viet Cong in the novel, he kills "the gentle little chance acquaintance who'd looked after me when I was drunk ... I had killed a man I knew". The theoretical enemy is belatedly recognised as the veritable friend. Even for this confused young man, who goes AWOL in Bangkok in the aftermath of the battle, another ideology—that of American imperialism—is well on its way to being perceived as the true enemy of Australia.

More numerous than the Australian novels which treat directly of the war in Vietnam, of which still no more than a dozen have been published, are those set in other Asian countries and written over the past quarter of a century. In these books, Vietnam receives at best a passing mention. Its implicit and—for want of a less ambiguous word—moral presence is signalled by the desire of numbers of the protagonists of these novels to seek out Asian mentors as teachers, perhaps as friends, although not often as lovers. Earnest endeavours by Australian governments since the 1960s to promote trade with Asian countries and by entrepreneurs to create what Paul Fussell has called tourist "bubbles"²⁹ there may have contributed to this shift of interest beyond the national borders. More profoundly affecting such a choice of subject and setting is in part the assuagement of guilt over the Australian military penetration of and involvement in Vietnam. Now, instead of that violent, metaphorically sexual assault upon that country, Australian novelists have often brought their characters humbly, almost sacrificially to places all over Asia in search of chastening enlightenment. This literature has, to an extent, been put to the covert work of discharging a burden of guilt that the writers have assumed concerning Australia's role in the Vietnam War. It may also come to be seen as another of the contemporary artistic expressions of a cultural death wish in Australia.

Vietnam provided no heroes for Australian legend-mills though this is not surprising in a country whose martial triumphs have almost always been represented in corporate terms. For a number of Australian novelists and historians, the traditions of Anzac were treacherously tarnished on the homefront during Vietnam, and have only retrospectively and wishfully been refurbished. In compensation, perhaps, assiduous work at legend-making from other, older sources went on in Australian fiction, drama, history and film during the 1970s. The historical fortunes of eccentrics and outcasts were remembered and revised. Figures such as the bushranger Martin Cash and the politician King O'Malley featured in polemical musicals by Michael Boddy and Bob Ellis. The bush balladist cum Boer War soldier 'Breaker' Morant, executed by the British for shooting Boer prisoners, was the protagonist of Kenneth Ross's play of 1978 and later of a film. Historian Manning Clark went *In Search of*

Henry Lawson (1978).³⁰ These characters had been celebrated and then punished for being just such social renegades as the serving men in Vietnam had no opportunity to be and—on their return home—few chose to become.

From the same period, poetry and fiction and the unflagging industry of military history in Australia refought the Great War. Surrogate for Vietnam, it was represented as a crucial moral and historical watershed in the national life. Novels by Roger McDonald, *1915* (1979),³¹ David Malouf, *Fly Away Peter* (1982)³² and Geoff Page, *Benton's Conviction* (1985)³³ as well as poetry by Les A. Murray ("The Conscript", "Visiting Anzac in the Year of Metrication") and Chris Wallace-Crabbe ("The Shapes of Gallipoli") insist with a troubling unanimity on a division between the innocent, rurally-oriented (at least in terms of its proclaimed values), *ante-bellum* Australia of 1914 and the post-war society whose idealism had been misplaced, although its history had properly begun. The Great War was a domestically divisive conflict, as Vietnam was. Compulsory military service *overseas* was perhaps as important a factor in opposition to the latter war as were objections to American hegemony. Vietnam was a foreign war, as all Australia's wars have been: this is a country that has known no border disputes, no hereditary enemies, no invasion and which has never initiated a conflict. Australians at first rushed willingly to volunteer for the Great War and most supported it stridently for a time. The strong initial public endorsement of the country's involvement in Vietnam had begun to wane by the end of the 1960s. The parallels that can be drawn and imagined between the two conflicts suggest how writers who made a nostalgic return to the Great War implicitly argued that the innocence lost then, the dependence on greater powers willingly embraced, prepared at the remove of two generations for Vietnam.

Australian forces were involved in Vietnam from 1962 until 1972, that is for considerably longer than in any other war where Australians fought. Yet that military engagement was scantily registered in contemporary imaginative literature besides the ephemeral protest poetry and the handful of novels already discussed. Nor has there been much analytical commentary on why this was so.³⁴ Of those authors whose first book was a Vietnam book, whether they served there or not, few have managed to develop a writing career. Nagle shifted to collaborating in film scripts, notably of the Vietnam movie *Fire Base Gloria* (1989). Out of the army because of the controversy caused by his Vietnam novel *Count Your Dead* (1968),³⁵ John Rowe has written several thrillers of impending apocalypse. It's war between India and China in *The Warlords* (1978)³⁶ and goodbye to the Aswan Dam in *The Jewish Solution* (1979).³⁷ Of Frazer, Pollard, Carroll, little more has been heard. 'Alexander' became McAulay again to join the most sizeable band of Australian prose writers of the war: memoirists, authors of battalion histories and accounts of particular battles. These writers choose what may seem to

them to be an undisputed terrain, one which is authorised by their personal experiences.

If Vietnam was at various times a place where Australians thought they never were or never had been (in the years from 1962 until regular forces other than the Training Team were committed; then for much of the decade after the Australian withdrawal in 1972), it has recently been given polemical and mythical co-ordinates. Vietnam has become the site of and the vehicle for a betrayal story that can be told in several ways. Early remarked and perhaps longest resented is the supposed lack of support or sympathy back in Australia for the lots of individual soldiers, as distinct from the abstract causes in whose name the war was prosecuted. Vietnam has become the site of and the vehicle for a betrayal story that can be told in several ways. Back in Sydney, Harry and the narrator of Nagle's *The Odd Angry Shot* reflect upon the indifference with which they've been received:

Pitch your condescending change to the organ grinder's monkey dressed in his green. Well, green once. (The girl beside me at the bar is making gestures as if to advertise the fact that I stink.) And I will lick up the droplets of your pitying safety and clutch them to my inept self, and sniff the dogs-arse of your offerings, and let the wash of your pious love hang about my ears as the lace curtain of my military halo.

"So here we are", they echo one another. The last spoken words of the novel are echoed as well: "Fuckin' terrific". Earlier, one of their compatriots, Bung, has wondered "if we'll stink when we get out of this place". His fear is that a man could still smell of Vietnam "for years to come, even when he's out of this arsehole country". The comment loses some of its ingenuousness, and takes on a macabre aspect given the subsequent reckoning of physical consequences of exposure to Agent Orange and other traumas of service in Vietnam.

"Embarrassed" is the word that a group of Vietnam veterans from Frazer's novel *Nasho*, gathered at an Anzac Day march, find for their feelings once back in Australia. Initial impressions had often been of outrage. "Shitwitted protestors", placard-carrying "mother-fuckers" (an American epithet imported into Australia during the Vietnam War) interrupted the welcome for T. Spriggs, as he recollected in *Desperate Praise* (1982),³⁸ edited by John Coe. In particular he remembered an Australian woman as the enemy: "this poxy excuse for a female, screeching and carrying a placard saying CHILD KILLERS". "Homecoming" is the title and subject of a poem that tries to make sombre peace out of this process. Bruce Dawe's threnody tells with grave tenderness of the return of the bodies of slain men to their Australian homes, "to cities in whose wide web of suburbs" in which "the spider web grief swings in his bitter geometry." Dawe laments, "they're bringing them home, now, too late, too early."³⁹

The betrayal of fighting men by venal, self-serving politicians is a venerable theme of war literature, as old as Horace, if brutally reinforced in this century through the experiences of many wars. The incompetence of generals on one's own side has been a commonplace since the battles of the Western Front in the Great War, when Siegfried Sassoon's "The General" did for both Harry and Jack "with his plan of attack". Vietnam confirmed these predictable betrayals, but as never before Australian writers turned the blame for the defeat in process (which they saw as America's defeat anyway, rather than their own) towards the allies of the Australian armed forces. The events of the Vietnam War became a means of bitter protest against a renewal of Australian dependency upon a great power, which since the beginning of the war in the Pacific in 1941, had been the USA rather than Britain. Supposed reportage in Australian fiction of Vietnam: accounts of "the bloody big-time, interfering, busy-body bloody Yanks" as one Australian castigates them in Rowe's *Count Your Dead*, of their carelessness on patrol, their prodigality with soldiers' lives, are polemically driven. They are a mordant, sometimes near hysterical variation of the complaint of the slighted colleague, who is really a dependant. The South Vietnamese allies fare even worse, being despised (as typically they are in American literature of the Vietnam War as well) for treachery, cowardice, corruption. Old Asian stereotypes were confirmed for Australians,⁴⁰ at least from the witness of their prose writings of the war. Sadly, still another foreign war became a buttress for Australian parochial prejudices, as well as an occasion for the reassertion of the martial spirit that was presumed to enshrine the best of national traditions. The "funny place" which Vietnam became in the slang of Australian serving men could be accommodated to allow the parade of abiding national anxieties and insecurities. The literature has not yet been written in Australia that comprehends this failure of courage and of introspection.

¹ Michael Frazer. *Nasho*, Aries Imprint, Melbourne, 1984.

² Rhys Pollard. *The Cream Machine*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1972.

³ William Nagle. *The Odd Angry Shot*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1975.

⁴ Jeffrey Welsh. *American War Literature: 1914 to Vietnam*, Macmillan, London, 1982.

⁵ Anzac is the acronym for the Australian New Zealand Army Corps whose landings at Gallipoli in April 1915 have been seen to inaugurate a martial and heroic tradition central to Australian mythology.

⁶ Ian McNeill. *The Team*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1984.

⁷ Peter Pierce. "Perceptions of the Enemy in Australian War Literature", *Australian Literary Studies*, 12: 2, October 1985, pp. 166-181.

⁸ David Williamson. *Jugglers Three*, Currency Press, Sydney, 1974 (first performed in 1972).

⁹ C.J. Cairncross. *The Unforgiven*, Sun Books, Melbourne, 1977.

¹⁰ C.J. Koch. *Across the Sea Wall*, Heinemann, London, 1965.

¹¹ C.J. Koch. *The Year of Living Dangerously*, Nelson, Melbourne, 1978.

- ¹² Richard Beilby. *The Bitter Lotus*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1978.
- ¹³ Robert Drewe. *A Cry in the Jungle Bar*, Collins, Sydney, 1979.
- ¹⁴ Bruce Grant. *Cherry Bloom*, Aurora Press, Sydney & London, 1980.
- ¹⁵ Blanche D'Alpuget. *Monkeys in the Dark*, Aurora Press, Sydney & London, 1980.
- ¹⁶ Blanche D'Alpuget. *Turtle Beach*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1981.
- ¹⁷ Ian Moffitt. *The Retreat of Radiance*, Collins, Sydney and London, 1982.
- ¹⁸ Gore Vidal. *Armageddon?*, Andre Deutsch, London, 1987.
- ¹⁹ John Laffin. *British Butchers and Bunglers of World War One*, Alan Sutton, Gloucester, 1988.
- ²⁰ Lex McAulay. *The Battle of Long Tan*, Hutchinson, Melbourne, 1984.
- ²¹ David Alexander'. *When the Buffalo Fight*, Hutchinson, Melbourne, 1980.
- ²² C.D.B. Bryan. "Barely Suppressed Screams", *Harper's*, June 1984.
- ²³ Michiko Kakutani. "Novelists and Vietnam: The War Goes On", *New York Review of Books*, 15 April 1984.
- ²⁴ Stuart Rintoul (ed). *Ashes of Vietnam*, William Heinemann Australia, Melbourne, 1987.
- ²⁵ Norman Bartlett. *Island Victory*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1955.
- ²⁶ David Forrest'. *The Last Blue Sea*, Australasian Book Society, Melbourne, 1959.
- ²⁷ Shirley Cass, Michael Wilding, *et al* (eds). *We Took Their Orders and Are Dead*, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1971.
- ²⁸ Kenneth Cook. *The Wine of God's Anger*, Cheshire-Lansdowne, Melbourne, 1968.
- ²⁹ Paul Fussell. *Abroad*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1980.
- ³⁰ Manning Clark. *In Search of Henry Lawson*, Macmillan, Melbourne, 1978.
- ³¹ Roger McDonald. *1915*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 1979.
- ³² David Malouf. *Fly Away Peter*, Chatto & Windus, London, 1979.
- ³³ Geoff Page. *Benton's Conviction*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1985.
- ³⁴ But note the study of the cultural impact of the Vietnam War on Australia by Peter Pierce, *et al*, (eds). *Vietnam Days*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1991, and in particular the chapters by Robin Gerster. "Occidental tourists: The ugly Australian in Vietnam War narrative", and Peter Pierce. "Australian and American Literature of the Vietnam War".
- ³⁵ John Rowe. *Count Your Dead*. Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1968.
- ³⁶ John Rowe. *The Warlords*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1978.
- ³⁷ John Rowe. *The Jewish Solution*, Holt, Rinehart & Winston Sydney, 1979.
- ³⁸ John Coe (ed). *Desperate Praise*, Artlook, Perth, 1982.
- ³⁹ Bruce Dawe. "Homecoming", in *Condolences of the Season*, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1971.
- ⁴⁰ Annette Hamilton. "Fear and Desire: Aborigines, Asians and the National Imaginary", *Australian Perceptions of Asia*, *Australian Cultural History*, 9, 1990.

Dismembering the Anzac legend: Australian Popular Culture and the Vietnam War

Jeff Doyle

The longevity and continuity of a particular strand of its popular mythology mark a culture's deepest concerns, reflecting the repeated and continuing attempts to formulate that culture's responses to, and its interpretations and evaluations of, particular social and political crises. Development of new narratives, or substantial modifications to existing myths, signal areas of active ideological concern where crises or ruptures within the cultural structures and their valuation may be occurring. The representation of Australian involvement in Vietnam, and its often uneasy conflation with aspects of the Anzac legend and its surrounding myths, provide just such locations of rupture in Australian culture.

For both Australia and the US, the Vietnam war has challenged the dominating popular imagery of their fighting men. Considerable gestures towards recuperation, revaluation and rehabilitation of the military culture in the United States have been made, especially throughout the 1980s. In the 1990s it seems likely that in the light of the build up to, prosecution and, subsequent completion of the Gulf War, some will determine that these processes of cultural re-investment in the American military ethos have once again achieved for military standards the "highs" associated with the icons of pre-Vietnam soldiery. The same re-investment of the military ethos within the culture, or to put it another way with a similar effect, of the culture's re-investment in the military ethos, has not been true of Australia until the late 1980s and early 1990s. Precisely how the Gulf War manifests its imagery within the, albeit more constrained, perceived recuperation of Australia's militarism is as yet more difficult to determine than in the US example. In the American case, Vietnam has loomed large, as the negative example, the pattern which the Gulf War was not to simulate. This appeal to Vietnam, despite the initial stated determination to exclude it from any reference, has become almost as numerous a correlative appendage to the Gulf presentation as that other iconographic marker—the appeal to Saddam Hussein's Hitlerian likeness—an appeal harking back to memory of an enemy by his very evil nature, and one inviting a more straightforward justification of the noble cause. References to Vietnam may prove for the Australian case a more divisive aide memoir. Evidence of changing attitudes within Australia to the military ethos before the Gulf War began implies a perceived recuperation in Australia's military ethos, a

recuperation in which Australia's Vietnam involvement was drawn from its marginal status into the mainstream. Significant gestures towards a restructuring if not quite a rehabilitating of the Anzac mythology reached some kind of peak in the celebrations surrounding the 75th anniversary of Anzac Day in 1990 and in the following anniversaries of the fall of Saigon and the 1970 Australian Moratorium marches, which were celebrated in the following two weeks. All were marked by a swathe of print, radio and television programmes devoted to those events and their reassessment. On several occasions the Anzac myth was restructured to incorporate the Vietnam material.

Moreover, as this popular media rewriting of both Gallipoli and Vietnam at once created and enhanced the strongly evident sense of the newly all-embracing Anzac myth, it also served to construct within popular culture another location for a new nationalism. The Labor Government orchestrated a highly media-vaunted return to Gallipoli of fifty-eight original Anzacs. The speech given there by the Prime Minister, R.J. Hawke, exhorted Australians to remember their earlier wars and the sacrifices made on their behalf, and moreover urged Australians to follow the Anzac soldiers' model of sacrifice, courage and mateship. The speech refocussed these Anzac commonplaces as the means of carrying the nation through to the next century. Indeed Hawke urged the nation to face the new current enemy—Australia's version of the West's continuing economic adversity—with a spirit emulating that of the original Anzacs. More, he urged this economic warrior spirit as a means of refounding the nation as it neared its second federated century. The logic which appeared to be operating in Prime Minister Hawke's speech is well known: "National character" and hence the nation's cultural integrity was bequeathed to the future not so much by the founding of Australia as a federation of 6 States in 1901, but through, in military parlance, the "bleeding" of the nation at Gallipoli in 1915. In appealing to the infusion of a newly invigorated Anzac spirit Hawke's speech seemed to argue that this would ensure the nation's economic integrity in the next century. In the weeks following Anzac celebrations, the media conflated the sentiments of that 75th Anzac Day with a celebratory reassessment of the Australian involvement in Vietnam, and rewrote that involvement into a revalued and "remembered" nationalist myth, praising the soldiers' courage, their sacrifices, their mateship. Simple acknowledgment of the effects of Vietnam upon the soldiery, let alone integration of their war into the myth, had not always been so straightforward.

At the cost of simplification, the Australian pattern of popular memory of Vietnam followed in the main the American pattern—although naturally the culture-specific myths demonstrate some variation.

Indian Country

Of the many bizarre euphemisms which the war produced, the US high command's "Indian country" came to refer both to the enemy territory in Vietnam and to the idyllic remembered time of the American frontiersman. Writing on Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* (1976) Robert B. Ray develops an argument which can be applied more widely to the US film industry's response to Vietnam. He points to the relevance of the basic American frontier myth of "regeneration through violence" and the pervasive tribal imagery of the film, and so links it back implicitly through a string of Vietnam westerns.¹ The driving narrative behind "regeneration through violence" lies in the "captivity narrative" which depicted the Puritan forefathers engaging in swift and violent action to retrieve the woman captured by the Indians. Rescue had to be swift to ensure that the weaker-virtued woman did not succumb to the libidinal temptations for which Indian ways stood. These narratives allegorized the sinful falls and saving restitutions located within the deep-set mental landscape of Puritan religious turmoil. "Indian country" represented and was depicted less as a forest or jungle and more as an infernal reflection of the Puritan mind in religious foment.

It is hardly surprising that as American representations of Vietnam demonstrated the amelioration of the US experience of the war, emphasis shifted from the fighting man as the site of disruption to the failure of the nation and specifically its Government to embody and protract its otherwise just political will.² Indeed in some Vietnam films individual soldiers win not only each engagement with the Vietnamese but, more significantly, victory over the forces of moral degeneracy within their own system.³ Vietnam becomes a mere site for the working out of the USA's own problems, moral and political, and in effect Vietnam as a real geographical place disappears as a reality for further American consideration. To this day the United States obfuscates any need for reparation to Vietnam on the grounds of the non-ratification of Nixon's Paris peace negotiations, coupled with moral indignation arising from the touchy issue of MIAs. And while this latter is a popular source for Vietnam films, few if any of the American popular images present or accept liability for any long-term effects of the war on Vietnam. For Americans the Vietnam war has found an internal resolution, which has facilitated a strong redefinition of the nation's own identity, largely at the cost of erasing the former enemy.

Diggers in Vietnam

Australian popular culture's representations of Vietnam have displayed a considerable appropriation of the American visual media's presentation of the war, consciously or otherwise. In certain areas, such as Australia's Welcome Home march in October 1987, this appropriation has extended to the returned servicemen themselves, for whom there seems to be an uneasy psychological conflation of fragments of the Anzac

tradition, often brought together with elements derived from the US military and media imagery.⁴ Here and elsewhere the pattern of conflating wars was repeated as often as the Anzac story was retold. And in that retelling there was an image developing—the image of the revived original Anzac conflated with the picture of a neo-patriotic and economically motivated digger. In the weeks surrounding the 75th Anzac celebrations there were many other confirmations that Australian society had reassessed the popular iconography of the military in general, and in this process had begun to restructure its responses to the Vietnam War in particular. But unlike the acceptable face of Vietnam now propagated by the American cultural industries, with Hollywood at the forefront, the Australian responses evident in those celebratory weeks in April and May 1990 did not find a resolution. Rather the various debates which ensued are suggestive of a continuing and politically active irresolute stance within Australian culture, seemingly to dismember Anzac.

Earlier patterns of recalling Vietnam were similar to the American evolution towards closure, but without the recuperation. Tracing that evolution may explain why the popular image of Anzac remains incompletely resolved.

As early as 1967-68 the Commonwealth Film Unit made a number of training films to aid in familiarising the troops with their duties and roles in Vietnam. Their imagery blends the traditional Anzac strands of the defence of a weak and defenceless ally and the necessary stand against the immoral enemy, with a resolute fighting spirit and intense comradeship. *Australian Task Force Vietnam*, and *Diggers in Vietnam* were made for the Directorate of Public Relations, in 1966 - 1967, while a third, *Action In Vietnam*, was made by the Commonwealth Film Unit in 1966. John Abbot made a fourth, *The Third Generation*, for Project '66' and the National Television Network. In narrative structure and style all are extremely similar; in each troops are shown engaged in the various tasks of Vietnam, the least time consuming apparently actual patrols.⁵ In contrast to the surreal nowhere/everywhere of the American frontier vision of Vietnam Australians, at least as far as these films are concerned, are consistently interested in the strict defining of the material conditions, locations, intentions of their war. Initially this searching for a definite locus of activities finds expression in images from the Anzac past. The jungle patrol scenes are nostalgic for the World War II New Guinea campaigns, as much as they are professionally located in the counter-insurgency techniques learned during Confrontation and Malaya. In the boldest terms of bodily icons, the soldiers upon whom the camera focusses are more often than not physically suggestive of the Anzac icon—the long angular-faced, tall and lean-bodied, sun-bronzed reticent, professing a preference for action; his humour is sardonic and often self-deprecating, his stare deliberate.

At the same time as they fix an Anzac icon, these films insinuate, in spite of themselves, the futility of the military activities being

undertaken. In the contacts, the searches, the interrogations, and the operations to search and destroy, the films demonstrate time and again that the NLF was rarely to be found, let alone engaged, and yet seemed to be everywhere. Time and again the voice-over of each film laments that "Charlie" just simply wasn't there, despite all the intelligence, despite the discovery of his food, his ammunition, his capture in large numbers and clearly in some encounters his overwhelming casualties by comparison with the allies. As the Australians return to base, these films observe that control returns to the invisible but ubiquitous enemy. This scenario is all too well known, but these films presented that dilemma in 1967 and 1968 and their audiences either evaded or could not read the message.

The "tossed-up fucked-up never-come down land"

Australian popular cinema and television charted a course similar to but of a miniscule scale in comparison with Hollywood. Major Australian representations of Vietnam are relatively few in number. Where the US industries' original evasion of direct comment and confrontation with Vietnam found expression in the appropriation of other genres, notably in the western, the smaller but burgeoning Australian film industry, and its television counterparts, emphasised Australian society at the turn of the century, that is upon an Australian equivalent of the western and upon the originating myth of Anzac itself. Films such as *Breaker Morant* (1980), *Gallipoli* (1981), *The Man From Snowy River* (1981), and mini-series such as *A Town Like Alice*, (1981), *1915* (1983), *Against the Wind* (1978), and *ANZACS* (1985) explored the territory of the Anzac legend or its components, such as the alleged bush or outback (frontier) origin of the Australian national character. Embedded in the structure of many Hollywood westerns, the captivity narrative proved a seed bed for the development of Vietnam's restorative narratives on the contrary in Australia the reassessment of Anzac in the 1970s and 1980s offered no such pattern of redemption through enforced violence. The home grown product of Australian cinema became increasingly radicalised against the positive representations of military action.

Australia has so far produced three large-scale popular movie "texts" on Vietnam. The earliest, *The Odd Angry Shot* (1979), adapted from William Nagle's novel of the same name, belongs to the tradition of Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* and Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead*, focussing relentlessly on the ever decreasing squad or platoon, to the exclusion of the enemy, and typical of the latter novel and film drawing disturbing parallels between military power and sexual adequacy. Tom Jeffrey's *The Odd Angry Shot* is focussed relentlessly on the squad, a closeness of focus which it shares with most American films. The difference lies in the way Jeffrey's film, following Nagle's novel, introduces overt political comment—in a manner not found in most Hollywood "frontline" films. At the risk of over-simplification, Jeffrey's introduces political content directed neither at a simplistic denunciation of communist aggression, as in the most politically naive (or at best black-

vs-white) level of John Wayne's *The Green Berets* or some of the MIA genre, nor is his political attack directed at the supposedly immoral government agents or agencies which betray the combat soldier in a number of examples of the *Rambo II* genre. Instead Jeffrey's film gives to the senior member of the squad, Harry, a series of statements. These define the political locus of the fighting man as the sticky fingered politicians' playthings, as counters in the politicians' next election campaign. This comment is of a different order to the Hollywood denunciation of venal politicians or the CIA. In the US examples, political comment rarely strays into posing more than suggestions about the distributions of soldiers into ranks by class evident within the salaries, risk levels and social reimbursement of the officers and other ranks.

Certainly the inequitable distribution of race and educational levels within the US forces are implicit in a number of Hollywood films but these issues are rarely if ever *the* focus of the film.⁶ When internal rifts occur within the Hollywood films they present opposed and competing versions of the American dream—either an extreme version of the middle class pursuit of happiness and leisure, the fruits of imperialism paid for by the blood of colonised nations—or the barbaric distortion of individualism, in which extreme militarism stands not for reticent justice but as the all too willing executive arm of corporate greed. The happy resolution is a restoration of a middle class moderation in which the individual will stand for both his own and his nation's sovereignty. (The use of the masculine pronoun is purposive here). Such a political stance is, this article contends, relatively simple-minded. This is not so in *The Odd Angry Shot*, where the class system and its correlative exploitation of the lower orders is exposed not just as the symptom of the Vietnam War's wrongs, but almost as if it were the root cause of the war. Jeffrey's and Nagle's attack is not simply directed at the failures of political will, neither the USA's nor Australia's; it falls more strongly upon the whole political and social structure of Australia—a nation in which the egalitarian appeal of Anzac to the "fair go" holds sway. Harry's speeches expose the fact that the "fair go" is a myth observed more in the breach. When another younger soldier, Bung, poses this question: "Why are we here then?" Harry replies:

You're a soldier, the same as every other silly prick in this tossed-up fucked-up never-come down land, and that's why you're here, because there's no one else and everyone's gotta be somewhere and you're here, so get used to it.

If "Indian country" is the familiar though threatening environment of the US mythology of warfare, its resurgence in Vietnam "texts" marked a shift in experiencing the war—a move away from the surreally dehistoricised landscape that had characterised the early Vietnam "texts", such as *Dispatches* and *Apocalypse Now*, to a site of mythic re-empowerment, no less dehistoricised, no less decentred from the physical

site of combat, but recognisably American, and rational. *The Odd Angry Shot* is significant in marking the early phase of the Australian interpretation of the war as different to America's. Harry's reasons for Australian being in Vietnam pose the Australian version of the surreal no place, the "funny place"⁷—"the tossed-up fucked-up never-come down land"—which was Australia's Vietnam. The war is being fought by the lower classes: "not too many silvertails here".

The sexuality of the Australians in *The Odd Angry Shot* is universally doomed as being more or less failures with women despite their own sense of prowess. Harry found that his wife just did not want to be with him, preferring the company, the inference is sexual, of other men. He is bewildered by the female response to him. The only normal relationship depicted in the film, between Bung and his girlfriend, ends when she and his mother are killed. Bill's girl writes only one letter—the proverbial Dear John—which sets a context for his R&R. Before conscription he urgently initiates sex with his girl lying down with her in the back garden—on R&R he refuses to lie down with the Saigon bar girl; his refusal manifests a damaged sexuality, a failure of trust. Throughout the film and the novel the soldiers' language is obsessively sexual, but it is all telling, all masculine joking about sex. There is no evidence that any of them have had successful sexual relations over a long time. Their most effective sexual expression is the construction and presentation of a "wanking" or masturbating machine for the padre. The obsessions and limitations are stereotypically patriarchal. In a macabre reversal which proves the rule of sexual dysfunction, the hideously wounded Scott is visited by the rest of the squad. The scene parallels that in *All Quiet on the Western Front* when the platoon visits the wounded Kamerik who has lost a leg. Scott writes a note to his visitors, a one word question: "Balls?" As senior man again it falls to Harry to explore the circumstances and he lifts Scott's bedclothes to inspect his body. Happily he reports that Scott has his due testicular quota. Here Nagle's novel is more specific about the loss of masculinity inherent it seems in the wounds of Vietnam. The film omits the novel's commentary about soldiers wounded in the genitals, and the unforgiving social consequences they will suffer when they have returned to the homeland. It may be that the technical nature of Vietnam wounds—a large number of Australian wounds were related directly to mine injury—is reflected in these fictional observations; there is as well memorial evidence to suggest that at least for Australians the most recalled wounds are those to soldierly masculinity. Stuart Rintoul's *Ashes of Vietnam* collects a large body of soldiers' reports, and comments on the war. Among the numerous clusters of images which can be seen to develop from the diversity of memories, injuries to genitals is one of the most dominant.⁸

In the late 1980s Australian culture had begun the processes of rewriting Vietnam as a more positive account of the experience of war, and even as a means of reconciliation of Australia within the southeast

Asian sphere. Two television mini-series appeared in 1987, Simpson-LeMesurier's *Sword of Honour* and Kennedy-Miller's *Vietnam*. Both presented a set of "representative" Australians, and both map a route of redemptive loss and reintegration via the varied experiences of the Vietnam war.

In *Vietnam*, the microcosm of Australian society is the Goddard family, their concerns reflecting precisely the pattern of divisive reactions to Australia's place within the larger contexts of southeast Asian and American politics and culture. In the figures of the family the historically divided sectors of Australian society are drawn almost allegorically. The father, Douglas, is a senior public servant for the Liberal Government. Initially in favour of the war, his development to a position of political opposition schematises the development of political awareness in Australian society throughout the war. The mother, Evelyn's, development from house bound and suppressed wife to liberated and mature femininity is suggestive of the pattern of social and political empowerment which some strands of the 1970s women's movement may have located in opposition to the Vietnam war. Megan, the daughter, "drops out of school, joins moratorium marches, experiments with sex and 'life-styles' and acts as the protector for her sometime boyfriend Serge—a draft dodger"; and lastly the son Phil, who is conscripted and is sent to Vietnam where he comes to believe in the necessity of the war. He also establishes romantic connections with a Vietnamese woman, who turns out to be a Vietcong and is subsequently killed by his platoon. On his return to Australia he is alienated from the newly "aware" and anti-war nation, and suffers from PTSD.

Where the "funny place" of *The Odd Angry Shot* finds its location at worst as the locus of non-sense and of political exploitation, *Vietnam* attempts mostly successfully to locate its action quite specifically in geographic and historical space. To some extent the certainty of locale is lost in the middle of the almost eight and a half hours of television viewing time (excluding advertisements) when the focus shifts to Phil's covert activities in a non-specific war zone—"Vietnam", but generally setting in time and place is detailed and precise. Precision is achieved in the first instance in the opening sequence, which consists of a montage of television images beginning with the then well known Australian Broadcasting Commission newsreader (in today's parlance he would be an anchor man), James Dibble, introducing a speech by the Prime Minister, Robert Menzies. Menzies' speech is well known in Australia, opening with the lines "You know me, for better or worse"; doubly ironic in the context: first, it announced the commitment of Australian support to Vietnam; secondly by appealing to recognition of the past's solid reality, *Vietnam* seeks to place the unfolding drama as a fiction true to life, with a real political message. Menzies is followed immediately by a series of "grabs" of American and Soviet politicians, various Australian and world celebrities, and increasingly intercutting snippets of film

reflecting aspects of recognisably Australian life in the 1960s. This montage fades into a shot of Parliament House, Canberra, dated November 1964.

Precise Australian social and political setting is thereby framed by the wider set of cultural values—easily recognised to Australians as their own, and this in turn is framed by wider social markers of international political and social events. This process of narrowing the focus from the world stage to the Australian is repeated in a number of ways throughout the series. In the first instance, in each of the ten separate “hours” of *Vietnam* there is another montage adding new contexts, events and people relevant to the unfolding history of the war. Additionally several of the “scenes” within episodes conclude with a special historic event “freeze-framed” for emphasis. A number of these internal montages are further “naturalised” within the story as they form part of a scene in which the family and associates watch television news reports about Vietnam as part of the dramatic action. Effectively the preliminary montages and these intrusions of “history” into the fiction validate both the news and the complete drama of the miniseries—teaching the 1987 television audience how to watch historic television, and how to watch the miniseries itself. The news, the “history”, is also validated in the process, and it needs validation, since the history it presents is highly selective and urges a particular reading of Australia’s Vietnam experience. This is not to argue that *Vietnam* is heavily biased in its treatment of the Australian experience of the war. More often than not *Vietnam* is even-handed in its assessments of the various and opposed sides to the war, at least those within Australia. The reading it provides is comfortable with a balanced view of the war, and moreover with the more accommodating climate of 1986-87 in which the participant soldiers, if not the war itself, had begun to be accepted more easily within the community. In its overall shape *Vietnam*’s message, beyond its appeal to entertainment, is anti-war, but not stridently so, and not without a large component of compassion for the serving men, like Phil, and the public servants and politicians, like Douglas, who became politically aware during and because of the war.

Television generally, and the soap-opera and mini-series genres in particular, tend to “normalise” middle-class values and lifestyles, and at the same time heighten the events of middle-class life into melodramatic tragedies. Running emotions at this high stress simultaneously evades the confrontation of serious and detailed dilemmas. Results or resolutions are achieved through catastrophic switches of circumstance, not through exploration and analysis. As miniseries go, *Vietnam* is exceptional since it does not opt in general for this style of drama nor for the all too glib and comfortable (and comforting) happy ending, neither for the family nor for the nation. Douglas has learned the need for political rigour and honesty but it may cost him his job, Evelyn’s maturity seems likely to depend on withdrawal from the family. Phil’s return to Australia and eventually to

the family is rent by the lasting effects of traumatic stress. On this level the drama is touched however with the light glow of optimism.

Nevertheless *Vietnam's* urgent fixing of the specific location marks in spite of itself a sense of lost certainty within Australian culture. Arguably perhaps, the sweep of world events framing the Australian material, together with the political events traversed by the action, demonstrate again and again just how marginal Australia was both in Vietnam and to the USA's concerns generally in the southeast Asian-Pacific region. And this marginalisation finally isolates the abiding political attack of *Vietnam*. Its strongest anti-war message is most firmly, though often in insidious fashion, levelled against US imperialism. Douglas' education in political subtlety begins when the Australian diplomat Montgomery tells him the truth about the disastrous effects of US materialism upon Vietnamese culture. Later, in one telling montage sequence, President Johnson speaks of the strategic bombing of North Vietnam's "concrete and steel" as a means of combatting aggression and defending the weak South Vietnamese from the spread of communism. Immediately undercutting these words are file footage images of the bombing of villages. In the fictional story which follows the Vietnamese girl Le, who is friendly with the Australians, is raped and her grandfather murdered by a platoon of American soldiers. Le is taking her grandfather to hospital with the aid both of money and foodstuffs given her by Phil and his comrade Laurie. In this incident motivation or more exactly the "excuse" is provided by the discovery of the Australian aid—specifically a tin of pears, and its wilful misinterpretation as loot, by the Americans. After her gang rape, one of the American soldiers is ordered to kill Le and take a "souvenir"—her ear. In a string of densely packed combat film clichés the soldier, who had not participated in the rape, is deemed a "cherry" and must redeem his manhood by the act of murder and mutilation. Still within the bounds of cliché the American "wimp" only pretends to shoot Le but takes the souvenir. This tragic event is one of the more obvious elements of making Australia's Vietnam comfortable for the television audience, by exculpating Australian soldiers from such acts while labouring the point of American imperialism's atrocities within Vietnam. For Australians there is the added irony, which redoubles the point, that it is their aid, their WHAM (Winning-the-hearts-and-minds) which effectively sanctions the atrocity. As a microcosm then, the aid of Phil and Laurie mirrors the complicity of Australian support within the larger theatre of war.

In this fashion the specific montage and juxtaposition of "world events" with local familial history destabilises Australia's role in Vietnam. Anti-Americanism is present everywhere in Australian writing, not only about Vietnam, but seems endemic within 1980s Australian culture. For Vietnam anti-American sentiment also touches upon the too easy appropriation of the well known betrayal myth underlying Gallipoli's adduction as the founding myth of the nation. Where the British high

command's bungling imperialism had cost Australian youth its life at Gallipoli, the nation found its origins. Vietnam as myth tended to replace the British flag with the American. Certainly as Australian political allegiances swung from Europe to the Asia-Pacific region, the US replaced Britain as the major ally and not surprisingly as the major focus of the fascination-repulsion with the harbinger of cultural dominance which characterises much that is Australian.⁹ But where Gallipoli provided a focus for fledgling nationalism, Vietnam had until 1990 provided only layers of dislocation. In *Vietnam* the underlying structure of anti-Americanism betrays the insecurity of Australia's movement from an inward looking, conservative and comfortable nation aspiring to an Anglo-European culture long since passed, to a player of whatever calibre on the world stage and in particular on the stage of Asia-Pacific matters. That move had been and remains troubling and problematic. *Vietnam* traces much of the deep concerns within Australian culture.

Vietnam also explores all of the familiar Hollywood tropes. Phil's alienation from his family manifests a mild form of PTSD and mirrors the larger disaffection of many of his veteran colleagues from the whole society. His subsequent return to the fold plays a significant variation on the captivity narrative, as it is through the agency of women that the revenant soldiery is healed in this Vietnam narrative. Phil's mental damage is reflected in the physical damage of his mate Laurie, whose sexual dysfunction again touches upon the failure of the masculine image to find a complete resolution. The mini-series ends with a tentative reconciliation, in which the lost son Phil arrives at his mother's flat. His plaintive greeting, "It's me—sort of" sums up the dual impetus of the series towards a hopeful reunification of the family and by inference of the nation. The hesitancy suggests the residual trauma, refracting the hope that Australia had reached a point at which the healing process might begin in earnest.

In its tenth and concluding episode *Vietnam* drew to a close several strands of narrative. The images of physical dismemberment in the last episode are both literal and metaphoric, and become the focus of two scenes in which Phil is able to recover some of his mental stability. Phil's comrade Laurie has returned to Australia and married the rape victim Le. Laurie is confined to a wheelchair, the victim of an ambush which Phil believes was engineered by Le's cousin and his one time romantic interest, Lien. Phil's stressed condition manifests itself strongly in Le's presence as a distrust of all things Asian. If Lien was VC, Phil maintains the belief that Le is VC too, and that far from loving Laurie she is using her sexual favours as a means of staying in Australia. Le is constantly placed in physically threatening positions by Phil; camera angles and confined spaces argue that the rape may be repeated. As well Phil's mental shattering is mirrored in the physical shattering of Laurie's body. Both men bear the marks of their legacy of Vietnam. So too does Le; she is finally drawn to display her mutilation to Phil as a means of

proving her bona fides as Laurie's wife, and of circumventing Phil's sexual threat to her. Moreover she explains to Phil the family ties and cultural necessity of Lien's actions, the reasons why she was forced to join the VC and why she seemed to use her sexuality duplicitously upon Phil. The audience knew much of the detail which Le relates, but the effect of her telling the story again of Lien's VC connections empowers Phil's understanding of Vietnamese culture, makes him see the damage necessarily enforced by the Vietnamese upon themselves in opposing Western actions. The long cultural history of family ties becomes the focus as Le explains that Lien had to join the VC when her brother was killed. Put simply it is difficult to conceive of the power of this scene as acted. Structurally it is an essential scene, much like the resolution in mutual mercy and pity of King Lear and Cordelia in Act 4 scene 7 of *King Lear*. Nor is the comparison with the highest literary standard odious or completely detrimental to the quality of *Vietnam's* script, direction or acting. Finally, however, the resolution of the Laurie-Phil-Le triangle is an uneasy one as none of the participants is made whole. Rather in the marriage of Laurie and Le is allegorised a possible resolution of Australia and Asian cultures, uneasily and uncomfortably resolved. Other examples will be more melodramatic, more oriented to the happy ending, and less true to the prevailing conditions within Australian culture.¹⁰

Turning to his family, Phil's traumatic alienation from them and Australia stands for the way large sections of the veteran community perceived themselves to have been treated upon their return to Australia and subsequently. In the fictional version Phil has returned from Vietnam but has not contacted his family at all. Indeed he steadfastly refuses to contact them, seeing his sister's anti-war stance as a betrayal. But released by the confrontation with Le from the guilt and anger of his Vietnam experience he now turns to effect a resolution within the family. Both this turn and the preceding one have focussed on issues of loyalty within families. Where Lien's act marks the Vietnamese people's history of unswerving loyalty to their state (as *Vietnam* comprehends it), Phil attempts to locate the root of loyalty and hence love within his own family. This is effected by a confrontation by telephone with his sister. An activist in the peace movement, Megan is giving an interview and talk-back on local radio when Phil calls her to ask how she would offer comfort to Laurie and the other veterans who have given the integrity of their bodies to defence of the nation, and have now been seemingly discarded. Once again the focus is on the bilateral mirroring of shattered minds and bodies. Phil asks Megan what she offers the shattered body of Laurie, her reply offers comfort to the shattered mind of her brother, wishing him back into the family's heart. The war is condemned but the soldiers exonerated, the nation at last wishing to absolve them from guilt and return them to the fold. The last episode concludes with a restored though largely damaged Goddard family, as Phil finally returns. The restoration is incomplete as his telling "It's me—sort of" last line makes clear.

In 1987 when the series was first shown that hesitant resolution looked like a position to be desired; a desire partly fulfilled in the latter part of 1987 when the Australian version of the Vietnam Welcome Home March was held in October. By early 1990, considerable distance had been travelled by the community and much of the, at least surface level, adjustment had been completed and a good deal of healing achieved. Curiously both *Vietnam* and *Sword of Honour* were subject to repeat broadcasts in early 1990, tapping or anticipating not only the society's more ready level of acceptance of Vietnam and an obviously high reappraisal of the soldiers, together with the accepting context of the events surrounding the 75th anniversary of Anzac day in 1990. The three events, re-broadcasts and 75th anniversary, are perhaps apiece in charting the newly accepted militarism within Australian culture.¹¹ If this inference can be drawn then the second screenings of *Vietnam* and *Sword of Honour* might well measure less the community's valuation of the message they contain and more the all too easy accommodation of Vietnam as a piece of televised history relevant only as negative example of how to conduct a war, as it threatened to become for the United States during the 1980s and so blatantly did become in the early 1990s. Worse, these events may have been reduced to commercial opportunities wherein history and its fictional representations are alike mere entertainments: Vietnam as a war of the long distant past, with little to tell us save the universal truths of suffering, courage and the like. *Vietnam* is a worthy vehicle for the more complex cultural context which produced it, than this latter treatment would allow, but the ease with which the militarism has again arisen within Australia and the popularity of *Vietnam*, among other vehicles which exploit Vietnam-as-subject for ratings winning melodrama (*Tour of Duty*, and *China Beach* for example) argue for the worst case. It is too early to be definitive. Together with the long term outcome of the Gulf war such cultural indicators may effect different outcomes in Australia, than they appear to be doing in the United States.

Sword of Honour is less complex, but its choice of characters is similarly schematic. From a background of rural selection Tony Lawrence is the recipient of the "Sword of Honour" as the number one cadet in his year at the officers' military training college, Duntroon, with a brilliant military career awaiting him. Both his career and personal life are blighted by Vietnam. His girlfriend, Esse Rogers, is enlisted in the peace movement at university and their relationship falls apart, signalled by her letter telling Tony that she has aborted their child. Unable to face the changed attitudes in Australia Tony flees to Thailand, with a Vietnamese refugee, Tam, from Phuoc Tuy. They have a child, Kim. Reversing the American captivity scheme, Esse searches for Tony, to discover that Tam has, one might unkindly say, conveniently died of TB, leaving Tony and Kim ripe for the return. Their reconciliation at the Lawrence's farm is a far less equivocal version of the Hollywood captivity narrative than that

of the Goddard's, and confirms a hopeful reconciliation of the disputing factions within Australian society, here allegorically welded by the presence of the Asian son. Both however suggest that the reshaping of the national identity has been forged via an incursion into an Asian setting at the behest of the American ally.

Conclusions

Other exemplary "texts" of the popular Vietnam imagery have largely followed the fictional desire for closure, and have also maintained the apparent inability of the nation to effect a reintegration of the myth. The large and well attended march of the veterans community on 4 October 1987 was for many held to be the Welcome Home march, the moment from which this re-integration could begin. And indeed it initiated a public process of recognition and healing of the psychological wounds. But the march itself and its subsequent recorded versions, particularly the Martyn Goddard documentary, demonstrate that the incorporation of Vietnam into Anzac was still lacking complete recuperation. On the contrary, the continued exclusion of Vietnam veterans from the full tradition of Anzac is enforced very noticeably in the Goddard documentary and in the numerous photographs reproduced in the media by the very corporeal intrusion of the veterans. Again and again the camera lingered on the disabled, literally dismembered, veterans to the near exclusion of the able-bodied marchers. The concentration on those whose bodies bear explicit evidence of wounds denied the all too easy incorporation of Vietnam within Anzac. The documentary presents an extremely moving, even excessively moving, lingering on the grief of the nurses and former patients, most especially the veteran Graham Edwards, a double amputee. In this lingering on excessive bouts of shared grief, the documentary is at odds with the stoic tradition of Anzac's "Lest We Forget", and is consequently very disturbing in its, until recently un-Australian, focus on emotional release. The strongest image of this grief was provided by several men who, as the popular song by political folk-rock band Redgum says, "kicked mines" and consequently lost limbs. Two such amputees are interviewed throughout the 30 minute programme. The last scene of the documentary shows Redgum leader John Schuman singing "I Was Only 19", while to his right on the stage is the veteran—Frankie—who is the subject of the song. An amputee, he sits in his wheel chair surrounded by family and, as the song continues, by more and more friends. At the song's conclusion Schuman shouts out "Welcome Home".

Where the US imagery of the welcome home march proposed utopian redress, the Australian image is ambiguous, an uneasy acceptance of the futility and the mutilation. The continued focus on the dismembered bodies of the soldiers makes impossible an appeal to the dehistoricised myth/memory of Vietnam which characterises the US, Stone's *Born on the Fourth of July* notwithstanding, since that film turns

the dismembered body into a pieta, if not pietistic image of the veteran. Disability becomes the ticket of entry to Hollywood fame. The American myth of regeneration through violence is fulfilled. Nor is Stone's film unique, for despite the elegance of the Washington Vietnam monument, and its oft noted refusal to soar inspirationally above ground which ensures a lack of glorification, its non-figurative nature and the brilliant metaphor of its reflective surface upon which the names of the fallen are inscribed, it evades the continuing legacy of the war, suggesting a disembodied loss. Those who survived physically in part or whole, whose lives and/or minds have been rent by the war, and those "members" of their families whose lives have been irreparably rent by the genetic legacy of the war, may be reflected in its surfaces but they are not intrinsically part of it.

The Australian Welcome Home march did not avert its gaze from those implications, but in 1990 the 75th Anzac Day celebrations presented the largest recent exfoliation upon the national myth, and here dismemberment was averted. Central focus in the media orchestra which accompanied the journey back to Turkey came to rest on the last group of original Anzacs ever likely to visit Gallipoli and return safely once again, for all of these men were in their late eighties or nineties. If the Anzac myth, however modified, is speaking to a new militarism, a new spirit of national identity, then its appeal lay in their faces and bodies which although age had withered, the myth had remembered, transmogrifying them once again into the bronzed Anzacs. True they were old men, their faces were thin and withered, they walked slowly and often with assistance, but the promise of the Anzac myth lived in them, for they had survived and they were remembered. Will the dismembered Vietnam veterans be treated with the same fame? Unless they too can be turned to effect a political necessity the chances are slim. This finally is the message of the dismembering of the Anzac myth—its true political focus supporting *The Odd Angry Shot's* contention that soldiers are the playthings of the sticky fingered politicians.

¹ Robert B. Ray. *A Certain Tendency of the Hollywood Cinema, 1930-1980*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1985, pp. 357-8. Ray's thesis depends on the analysis of frontier captivity narratives developed by Richard Slotkin. *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890*, New York, 1985, especially ch. 2.

² For seminal studies of the American cinematic representations of Vietnam, studies which underlie much of this paper see Albert Auster and Leonard Quart. *How the War Was Remembered*, New York, 1988; Gilbert Adair. *Vietnam on Film*, New York, 1981; Rick Berg. "Losing Vietnam: Covering the War in an Age of Technology", *Cultural Critique*, 3, 1986, pp. 92-125; Julian Smith. *Looking Away: Hollywood and Vietnam*, New York, 1975; and, Richard Slotkin. "Gunfighters and Green Berets: *The Magnificent Seven* and the Myth of Counter-Insurgency", *Radical History Review*, 44, Spring 1989, p. 67.

³ This is most easily evident in John Rambo's frustrated shooting of the array of CIA computers at the conclusion of *Rambo: First Blood II*, but *Platoon* and *Born on the Fourth of July* also manifestly remove moral responsibility, and more tellingly failure from the soldier, placing it upon the system.

⁴ Jane Ross has written extensively on the contestatory nature of the "image" of the Vietnam veteran. See her essay, "Veterans in Australia: the Search for Integration", in this volume, pp. 50-73 and others referred to in the Select Bibliography.

⁵ Section 1. d of the Select Bibliography lists a number of these films.

⁶ It might be argued that the training films meant to demonstrate a certain verisimilitude towards Australian military practice, in part the expectation that Vietnam like most wars was mostly spent waiting and preparing for action and not "in combat". One of the differences that most reports of Vietnam seek to make, is that "in country" meant "in combat" all of the time, since the enemy was everywhere, combat stress was universal. This point is implicit in Lex McAulay's *The Battle of Long Tan: The Legend of Anzac Upheld*, Hutchinson, Melbourne, 1986, and he attempts to make it explicit in his day-by-day account of a "typical" battalion tour in *Contact. Australians in Vietnam*, Hutchinson, Melbourne, 1989. However, it should be noted that the amount of time the training films infer that Australians would spend on "non-combat" duties, in varieties of logistic and perimeter maintenance, and on the Winning-the Hearts and-Minds tasks, finds uneasy in-practice confirmation in Terry Burstall. "Policy Contradictions of the Australian Task Force, Vietnam, 1966", in this volume, pp. 35-49. Burstall argues the evidence for what the films prophetically imagine, that the Australian combat operations would be seriously attenuated as a result of military and political contradictions between Australian politicians and their military leadership, and more dramatically between American combat expectations and Australian performance.

⁷ See Chris Flaherty and Michael Roberts. "The Reproduction of Anzac Symbolism", *Journal of Australian Studies*, 24, May 1989, pp. 52-69.

⁸ While some films appear to touch on these issues—the separation of the "two cultures" in *Platoon*; or, the often clear demarcation of skills and education arrogated to the nominal protagonists of many films such as *Full Metal Jacket*, *Platoon*, or *Casualties of War*, skills, which the films suggest, but do not pursue, enable them to "write" their way out of the war—the detailed political ramifications of race, education and economic back-ground seem hardly to rise beyond passing observations.

⁹ Analysis of the language of the political speeches made by both sides in the Gulf War will when they are written note the overlap of moral, legal, military and economic motivations. Commentaries unkindly disposed to the "Coalition" may well note also the conflation of the languages of corporate strategies and military intervention, and subsequently draw the veils shielding the links between certain kinds of imperialism and their self-justifying calls to defend individual and national sovereignties, when neither of these issues are the root of the military action.

¹⁰ For another discussion of the dis-location of Australia in Vietnam which makes specific points about the "funny place", see Peter Pierce. "The Funny Place': Australian Literature and the War in Vietnam", in this volume, pp. 98-108.

¹¹ See Stuart Rintoul (ed). *Ashes of Vietnam*, William Heinemann, Melbourne, 1987. Peter Pierce discusses in more detail Nagle's novelistic comments about

sexually damaged soldiers in "The Funny Place": Australian Literature and the War in Vietnam".

¹² See Tom O'Regan. "The Enchantment with Cinema: Film in the 1980s", in Albert Moran & Tom O'Regan (eds). *The Australian Screen*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1989, pp. 118-145.

¹³ For a more detailed corroboration of the swings in political allegiance see the two opening papers in this volume, Peter Edwards. "The Australian Government and Involvement in the Vietnam War", pp.16-25; and Jeffrey Grey. "Vietnam as History: the Australian Case", pp. 26-34.

¹⁴ It is worth noting the colateral evidence of Australian reaction to Vietnamese and other Asian refugees as detailed by James Coughlan's essay, "International Factors Influencing Australian Governments' Responses To The Indochinese Refugee Problem", in this volume, pp. 84-97.

¹⁵ For one such early perception of this tendency see Graeme Cheeseman and St John Kettle (eds). *The New Australian Militarism: Undermining our Future Security*, Pluto Press, Sydney, 1990.

Australia and Vietnam War—A Select Bibliography.

Jeff Doyle and Jeffrey Grey

Introduction

In keeping with the wide range of concerns of the essays in this volume the bibliography has attempted to cover as many “subject headings” as seemed possible. Thus while the title “Select Bibliography” suggests that the compilers have collected only the major “texts” of concern, the following lists are an attempt to be as complete as possible at the time of final compilation. “Select” is meant to convey the fact that the editors are certain (most likely the only certainty prevailing in scholarly life) that the lists are not complete. This incompleteness applies to some areas more than to others. Newspapers and the general daily print media, and their radio and television equivalent news industries are the chief areas of extreme selection. Transience is the one problem, and the, not unrelated, determination of importance, the other—the question of which of the thousands of such daily reports are worth reading is unfortunately beyond the collecting and sorting powers of a study such as this.

In the related area of electronic production, the overwhelming musical response to Vietnam in American popular and folk music areas, simply drowns most of the Australian output, but the fact that we have not here listed references to the little that was produced in Australia does not reduce its significance. A number of examples make the point—one would not look to Russell Morris’ late 1960s single “The Real Thing” as directly related to Vietnam but its overall surreally apocalyptic lyrics, and the accompanying “nuclear explosions” (pre-David Bowie) of the promotional television “film” (note, film since it predated the current “rock video” genre), are redolently anti-war. It would pay research to look into the numerous other popular songs which conflate psychedelia with the general millenarianism which infected popular music—even that of “flower power”—in late 1960s and early 1970s culture. A major problem here is the overlap between Australian, British and American styles and influences. Later, in the 1980s Australian popular music found a number of voices, chiefly Jimmy Barnes and his band Cold Chisel’s “Khe Sanh”, redolently Bruce Springsteen in style, and the strong folk-politics of John Schumann and Redgum’s “[I was] Only 19”. Both “hits”, and therefore in the public ear, so to speak, these songs too require more study, and they are worthy of inclusion, if only in passing in this note. Their context is widened in the same way as that of the fictional literature when the array of songs both newly written and revived, dealing with Australian involvement in other wars, largely and not unexpectedly devoted to the First World War, is taken into account. Eric Bogle’s “The Band Played Waltzing Matilda” springs easily to mind as exemplary. Indeed the compilers felt that as its products came to light, the area of popular musical culture tended to grow so large that it required separate study.

It has also been editorial practice to distribute the material into sections, more through broad media and generic criteria than by breakdown into more numerous and quite specific "subject headings". Printed secondary texts have been the least distributed in this sense; so that where normal practice might find theses, monographs, articles, reviews and journalism as separate sets of entries, in section 2 they are all listed together. Effectively this presents the work of several scholars in one section, demonstrating not only the quantity but the breadth of writing styles, genres and so on, in which they have worked. Additionally as remarked in the introductory comments, such a listing functions methodologically—demonstrating the strengths, weaknesses, and the wider contexts of its production of any single example of Australian writing on the Vietnam War and its aftermath.

A Note on the bibliographic practice

In preparing this material for an American audience it seemed sensible to identify the origin of publication as the city in Australia, rather than the sometimes specific, but to a general US audience often more obscure, suburb which the strict bibliographic practice of taking the location from the cataloguing-in-publication information, or the title-page, would require. Thus, in the following lists, and especially in section 1.e, and section 2, for example, a text published in Gladesville, 1965, will be listed as Sydney, 1965. There are two exceptions. Penguin books will be listed as published in Ringwood, and not as Melbourne, and University of Queensland Press at St. Lucia, as these are the common and well known points of origin of these major publishers.

1. Primary Sources

Primary Sources: a) Archives

All records generated by the Australian Federal Government are subject to the Archives Act (1983) which provides for material to be released to public access thirty years after its creation, the so-called "thirty years rule". Australia also possesses a Freedom of Information Act (1982), but unlike in the United States the provisions of this legislation do not cover records generated before its enactment.

In consequence, records relating to Australia's war effort remain closed to public researchers; the current official historian of Australia's involvement in southeast Asian conflicts, Dr Peter Edwards (whose paper opens this Vietnam Generation Special No.) and his staff, have full and unhindered access to all such material for the writing of the history, but non-official historians will have to wait until 1993, when the first records related directly to Australian involvement in Vietnam will be due for release.

There is one significant exception to this state of affairs, and that involves material used in evidence before the Evatt Royal Commission on the use of herbicides, pesticides and other chemicals by the Australian Army. These records, all operational in nature, were released to public access in 1982, and are located at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra in a temporary record series, AWM 181. This series comprises some thirty shelf metres (approx. 93 shelf feet) of documents and contains important runs of operational records generated by Headquarters 1 Australian Task Force, MACV combined campaign

plans 1966-1972, intelligence summaries and some unit records, as well as some administrative files. The unifying principle lies in the observation that all this material contains references to the use of chemical agents in Phuoc Tuy province. The total run of operational records, some 500 shelf metres (approx. 1600 shelf feet) of material, is contained in AWM 95 and is subject to the thirty year rule. This is the case for all other Australian Government records relating to Australia's Vietnam War, such as those generated by the Departments of External Affairs or Labour and National Service.¹

Private records and those created by non-Government agencies are subject to no such restrictions (unless private embargoes, or normal copyright rules are applied); there are important collections relating to the various anti-war, anti-conscription movements held in State and university libraries around Australia. To give but two examples: the records of the Campaign for Peace in Vietnam, a pressure group formed in 1967 and based in the state of South Australia, are held in the State Library of South Australia in Adelaide (the state capital) as record Group 124; they occupy nearly nine shelf metres.² Most states spawned a branch of the Vietnam Moratorium Campaign, formed in 1970, and these records are held in the State Library in South Australia's case, but in the University of Melbourne Library in the case of the state of Victoria.

The National Library of Australia in Canberra holds a number of important collections of anti-Vietnam War material; prominent among these are the records of the Save Our Sons group (MS 3821), the Vietnam Moratorium Committee (MS 4969), and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (MS 7755). The papers of significant individuals in the protest movements are often valuable sources of material; at the National Library, to give but two examples, the papers of Ian Turner (MS 6206), radical Melbourne academic, contains three boxes of anti-Vietnam War records, while the collection donated by Andrew Reeves (MS 8076) concentrates particularly on student radicalism and anti-war agitation. A further source of anti-war material is to be found in trade union records, many of which are held by the Archive of Business and Labour based at the Australian National University in Canberra.

Private groups which supported Government policy in Vietnam are much less well documented. Perhaps the principal organisation with relevant papers in the public domain is the Returned Services League (the equivalent of the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars), the records of whose federal body likewise are held by the National Library (MS 6609).

As Terry Burstall's paper demonstrates, there are considerable though as yet relatively untapped US sources for the Australian participation in the Vietnam War. As well as operational records, held by the National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C., and the papers of senior military figures held, for example, by the United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, there are numerous items relating to foreign policy and governmental relations in the papers of the State Department. There are in all likelihood more references scattered through other American resources.

¹ There is a lengthy, unpublished series guide to *AWM 181*, held at the Australian War Memorial. See also Helen Creagh. "Search and Re-search: Operation Mitchell: Information

collected in the search to compile the Report on the Use of Herbicides and Insecticides and other chemicals by the Australian Army in South Vietnam", *Archives and Manuscripts*, 11, May 1983: 7-13.

² Malcolm J. Saunders. "A Note on the Files of the Campaign for Peace in Vietnam", *South Australiana*, 21, September 1982: 105-10.

Primary Sources: b) printed texts—Government and government institutional documents

As well as the following short list, one of the most essential resources for Australian Parliamentary matters are in the daily Hansard transcripts of all matters before the two houses (Representatives and Senate) of the Australian Parliament, for example in *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, vol. H[ouse] of R[epresentatives] 43, 1964. A specific speech or report will be listed under the date it was given.

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Primary Sources: c) newspapers, magazines, journals

Researchers of the printed news media's reporting of the Vietnam War have produced a wealth of material in the US, particularly in search of the answers as to how influential (or otherwise) that media, in concert with the electronic media, were in bringing the war to an end. The relatively few studies of Australia's print media (which are listed below in section 2) have concentrated on its influence and other aspects, notably the political allegiances of the media, but there is yet to be any overarching study, partly no doubt due to the daunting task of collecting the data. The news media archives are easily available in the case of the major newspapers, the city dailies and weeklies, but the material is on the whole insufficiently indexed to allow effective access, other than reading

through each text in toto. A number of groups are collecting, however, either with specific subject criteria in train or more generally. Two examples: first, the Politics Department of the Australian National University has a large clipping collection, devoted as one might expect primarily to governmental and policy references, and less to operational or "social" material; secondly, the "Representation of the Vietnam War in Australia" Project at University College, ADFA has for three years been collecting all references from all the major dailies (such as the Sydney Morning Herald, Australian, Age, and Brisbane Courier), and the periodicals (Quadrant, Nation, and so on), beginning in 1962 and progressing to the present, but the task is daunting, and requires significantly more funds and research time.

The following list provides the titles and in some cases the affiliations of a large selection of such organs, together with a selection of professional (military) journals, and the often short-lived journals of the various groups of the anti-war, draft resister's, Moratorium, and other peace movements.¹ Most of the issues of the major newspapers will be held in hard copy or micro-form (fiche or film) in the various state and university libraries as appropriate. In some cases the publishers will also provide access (and more substantial indexing) of their publications. The more ephemeral material is often hard to find; some of it will be found in collections such as those listed under section 1. a, above.

The Advertiser [daily Adelaide newspaper]

The Age [daily Melbourne newspaper]

Army

The Army Journal

Australian [daily national newspaper]

The Australian Women's Weekly [weekly national magazine focussed on pre-feminist notions of women's issues]

The Bulletin [weekly national journal]

The Canberra Times [daily regional newspaper]

The Catholic Weekly 1963-1968

The Catholic Worker [Melbourne religious journal]

The Courier Mail [daily Queensland newspaper]

The Daily Bulletin [Townsville newspaper]

Debrief [Official Quarterly Journal of the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia (VVAA) PO Box 369, Parramatta, NSW, 2150, Australia]

Department of Veterans' Affairs Pamphlets

Despatch

Dissent

Farrago [Melbourne University, Students' Representative Council newspaper]

Herald

Honi Soit [University of Sydney Student paper]

International: A Revolutionary Socialist Magazine

The Listening Post

Lots Wife [Monash University, Students' Representative Council newspaper]

The Mercury [daily Hobart, Tasmania]

The Mirror [daily Sydney newspaper]

Moratorium News [Official organ of the Vietnam Moratorium Campaign, Melbourne]

Mufti

Nation [periodical newsmagazine]

National Times [weekly national newsmagazine]
New Basis
Old Mole [Sydney University paper]
Outlook
Partisan
Peacemaker
Print [Monash Labour Club Newsletter]
Quadrant [monthly periodical current affairs and intellectual life journal]
Rabelais [La Trobe University, Students' Representative Council newspaper]
Resist and Resistance Notes [Students for a Democratic Society Anti-Conscription
 Committee Newsletter, Melbourne University committee]
Reveille [Journal of the New South Wales Branch of the RSL]
The Returned Services League Newsletter
The Sun Herald [Sydney Sunday newspaper]
The Sunday Observer [weekend newspaper]
The Sunday Telegraph [Sydney Sunday newspaper]
The Sydney Morning Herald [daily Sydney newspaper]
Tharunka [University of New South Wales Student paper]
Tribune [weekly national political newspaper]
VerBosity [Repatriation Commission: Veterans' Review Board publication]
Vietnam Action [journal from the Vietnam Action Campaign group]
The Vietnam Digest, December 1968-July 1970 [7 no.s (ed). Peter Samuel for The
 Friends of Viet Nam]
Vietnam Today [Newsletter of the Australian Vietnam Society]
Woroni [Australian National University Student newspaper]
YCAC Newsletter [Youth Campaign Against Conscription]

¹ For a larger list of Victorian student and anti-war journals see Barry York, *Student Revolt: La Trobe University 1967-1973*, Nicholas Press, Canberra, 1989: 171-2.

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Primary Sources: e) printed texts—fiction, memoirs, poetry & drama

A number of texts in this section may appear initially as dubiously related to the Vietnam War. But as will be clear following the arguments put forward throughout the articles of this special number, Australia's response to the Vietnam War is tied intimately to its long and continuing relationships with the whole of the southeast Asian-Pacific region, and moreover to its own conceptions of its place within the myths and legends of a western tradition of warfare and colonialism. Focus of the texts below on occasion may fall less specifically upon Vietnam than on the wider region; as often on Vietnam, as on Indonesia, New Guinea, Japan, and Kampuchea/Cambodia, among others.

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- Cole, Tom. "Medal of Honour Rag", Ensemble Theatre, Sydney, 31 March 1977.
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Primary Sources: f) cinema, and television and radio programmes

For Australia, Vietnam was by no means the media war it is commonly held to have been (and seemingly remains) for the US, but there was a moderate, and as the war progressed increasing, electronic media response. Little of this has been touched on in any detail, nor listed in any comprehensive manner, with the exception of the work of Ann Mari Jordens in a paper delivered at the Macquarie University Conference in 1987.¹ It would be impossible, however, to list every reference to Vietnam made in the television and radio media during the period of the war, and subsequently as it came to feature weekly, if not nightly (as it seems in the US), in the various network news and current affairs programmes. There are other complexities: in the case of the numerous short films made by the Commonwealth and State bodies, a number of these may exist in variant prints, and occasionally differing dating and production details appear within the catalogues; in addition scenes from some of the earlier films reappear as if contemporary to the later film's footage; additionally much has been edited for use within other commercial current affairs material, again without noting their "file footage" status. The list given below is therefore even more selective and imperfect than the term "select bibliography" might imply.

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- Land of Fire*, 1981, film, Martha Ansara.
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- The Quiet War*, 1967, short film, Australian Broadcasting Commission.
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- Public Enemy Number One*, 1980, producers David Bradbury & Steward Young, for the Creative Development Branch, Australian Film Commission.
- Ranger Advisors—Vietnam*, 1972, short film, Directorate of Public Relations, Department of the Army.
- Red Cross Civilian Relief in Vietnam*, 1967, short film, Cine Service for the Australian Red Cross Society.
- Rescue Vietnam*, 1968, short film, Mathais, Kenyan & Merton Pictures, for Australian Red Cross Society.
- "Right as Rain", 17 December 1989, radio drama, David Knox, Australian Broadcasting Corporation Radio.
- Sad Song of Yellow Skin*, 1976, film, directed Michael Rubbo (Australian) for the Canadian National Film Board.
- The Siege of Fire Base Gloria*, 1989, feature film, director Brian Trenchard-Smith, script William Nagle [ostensibly a US film, shot in the Philippines, the director and script writer are Australians or Australian trained; technical processing done in Sydney].
- The Soldier*, 1967, short film, Australian Broadcasting Commission TV.
- Special Air Service in Vietnam*, 1971, short film, Directorate of Public Relations, Department of the Army.
- A Street to Die*, 1985, film, producer/director Bill Bennett.
- Sword of Honour*, 1987, TV miniseries, ATN7 Network, producers Simpson-LeMesurier, subsequently released on video.
- Task Force Vietnam*, 1969, short film, Directorate of Public Relations, Department of the Army.
- This Day Tonight*, Australian Broadcasting Commission TV news and current affairs programme, active in the Vietnam period.
- Three Bridges to Cross*, 1966, film, Australian Broadcasting Commission TV & Japan Broadcasting Corporation.
- The Trespassers*, 1976, feature film, director John Duigan.
- The Unlucky Country*, 1967, short film, Australian Commonwealth Film Unit.
- Vietnam*, 1987, TV miniseries, TEN Network TV, producers Kennedy-Miller, directors Chris Noonan & John Duigan, script by Terry Hayes, Chris Noonan, John Duigan and others. [a version edited from the broadcast time (excluding advertisements) of approximately eight-and-a-half hours to six hours on two cassettes is available in the United Kingdom from CBS Video, American viewers should contact CBS US distributors to determine the availability of this version].
- "Vietnam Documentary", August 1989, documentary, Special Broadcasting System TV, producers Reg Boulter & Douglas Mann.
- "Vietnam Retrospect", 1988, Australian Broadcasting Corporation audio cassette.
- Vietnam Interpreters*, 1967, short film, Department of the Army.
- Vietnam Scene*, 1967, short film, Department of the Army.

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- The Vung Tau Ferry*, 1971, short film, Department of the Navy.
- Warriors, Friends or Foes?*, 1988, TV documentary series, episode 2.
- White Paper No. 1—Conscription*, 23 April, 1966, TV Debate, producers ATN 7 Network, Sydney University, & Ampol Petroleum Australia.
- Winter of Our Dreams*, 1981, feature film, director John Duigan.
- You Can't See Round Corners*, 1968, feature film, David Cahill, based on the TV drama (soap), 1967-68, in turn an updated version of the novel by Jon Cleary. *You Can't See Round Corners*, 1947 [the novel deals with draft resistance and absenteeism in the Second World War, the TV and film updates presents the hero as a Vietnam draft resister].

In addition single episodes of various serial (or soap) dramas and situation comedies, have been devoted to Vietnam and/or Vietnam veterans; these include: *A Country Practice*, 1989; *Col'n Carpenter*, 1990; *The Flying Doctor*, 1990; and *Winners*, 1985. Occasional "sketches" in television comedy programmes have depicted Vietnam film stereotypes (especially Rambo-like crazed killers); these include: *The Comedy Company*, 1990; *Let the Blood Run Free*, 1990; and *The Big Gig: Tuesday Night Live*, 1989-90.

¹ See also Ann Mari Jordens. "Cultural Influences: the Vietnam War and Australia", *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, 15, October 1989: 3-14.

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A Select Chronology of Australian Involvement in the Vietnam War

1950	14 January	Ho Chi Minh declares Democratic Republic of Vietnam.
	7 February	United States and United Kingdom recognise the French sponsored government of the former Emperor Bao Dai.
	8 February	Australia recognises Bao Dai Government.
	9 March	Percy Spender, External Affairs Minister, speaks of the Domino Theory in the House of Representatives.
	8 May	United States provides \$10 million in military and economic aid to the Bao Dai Government.
1951		ANZUS treaty signed.
1953		Jean Letourneau, French Minister in charge of Indochinese matters invited to visit Australia to discuss aid.
1954		John Foster Dulles, American Secretary of State, encourages "united action" during the Indochina crisis.
	7 May	The Battle of Dien Bien Phu lost by the French and Bao Dai forces.
	8 September	South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) formed with initial signatories United States, United Kingdom, France, Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Thailand, and the Philippines.
	9 October	France leaves Hanoi.
1955		US aid is provided directly to Saigon. Australia sends troops to aid in Malayan Emergency.

1957	May	Ngo Dinh Diem, President of South Vietnam, visits the USA.
	September	Diem visits Australia.
1960	20 December	The National Liberation Front (NLF) is founded by Hanoi for the liberation of South Vietnam.
1961		Laos crisis. Indonesia incorporates former Dutch West New Guinea colony as Irian Jaya.
	17 November	United States seeks diplomatic indications of Australia's stance on, and willingness to assist in, South Vietnam.
1962		Establishment at North West Cape, Western Australia of a Very Low Frequency "joint" US-Australian naval communications station.
	13 January	Operation RANCH HAND (defoliation) begins.
	24 May	Athol Townely, Minister of Defence, announces that 30 advisers are to be sent to South Vietnam.
	July-August	The first of the Training Team arrive in South Vietnam.
1963		Malaysia formed. Indonesia embarks upon Confrontation.
	1 June	William Francis Hacking, an adviser is the first Australian casualty, killed 40 miles west of Hue. 15,000 American advisers in South Vietnam, and \$500 million aid is given.

1964		Australian advisers increased to 83.
	June	Robert Menzies, Australian Prime Minister, visits Washington, D.C..
	2 August	USS Maddox incident in the Gulf of Tonkin.
	4 August	USS Turner Joy incident.
	7 August	US Congress passes Tonkin Gulf Resolution.
	10 November	National Service (Conscription) Act proclaimed.
1965	January	Agent Orange first used.
	March	American marines land at Da Nang.
	29 April	Menzies announces the commitment of Australian combat troops.
	May-June	1RAR (800 men) arrive in Bien Hoa, to join the USA 173rd Airborne Brigade. US troop commitment reaches 50,000 men.
	13 May	Save Our Sons (SOS) founded.
	September	Morgan Gallup Poll shows that 56 per cent of Australians in favour of Australian participation, 28 per cent in favour of withdrawal, ten per cent undecided.
	22 October	First arrests (65 people) for anti-War demonstration in Sydney.

1966	26 January	Harold Holt succeeds Menzies as Prime Minister and leader of the Liberal Party.
	8 March	Government announces an increase in troops - two Battalions and support, and the Special Air Services, to be sent to Phuoc Tuy province, a total of 4500 men including 500 conscripts.
	16 March	2000 people march in protest against the war organised by the SOS group.
	May	Seamens' Union refuse to load supplies for Vietnam on the <i>Boonaroo</i>
	24 May	Errol Wayne Noach, the first conscript killed in action.
	14 June	5th and 6th Battalions RAR and supports in place at Nui Dat, with logistic support base at Vung Tau, 30 kilometres (16 miles) south.
	30 June	Holt visits Washington D.C., and in speech utters the famous "all the way" in support of L.B. Johnson's Vietnam policy.
	18 August	The battle of Long Tan, Australia loses 18 KIA, for a claimed 245 Vietnamese KIA.
	21-22 October	President Johnson visits Australia. One million Sydneysiders and 500,000 in Melbourne line the streets to welcome him on successive days.
	19 November	Morgan Gallup Poll: 68 per cent in favour of conscription; 37 per cent in favour of sending conscripts to Vietnam.

1967	8 February	E.G. (Gough) Whitlam succeeds Arthur Calwell as leader of the Federal Opposition, The Australian Labor Party.
	May	Morgan Gallup Poll: 62 per cent in favour of the War; 24 per cent in favour of Australian withdrawal; 14 per cent undecided.
	2 October	A "Teach-in" titled "National Forum on Vietnam" held at Monash University, Melbourne.
	17 November	Holt missing presumed drowned. John McEwan (Country Party - the Liberals' coalition partner) succeeds to Prime Ministership on 19 December.
	November - December	Australian commitment rises to a peak of 8,300 men.
1968		Australian Draft Resister's Union established.
	10 January	John Grey Gorton, Liberal Party leader, succeeds to Prime Ministership.
	31 January	Tet Offensive.
	12 February	Gorton announces semi-officially that there will be no increase in Australian commitment.
	16 March	My Lai occurs but remains unknown until 16 November.
	May	National Services Act amended to impose two year civil gaol term for draft evaders.
	August	Paris student riots.

1969	June	President Richard Nixon announces withdrawal of 25,000 men and the initiation of "Vietnamization".
	August	Morgan Gallup Poll: 55 per cent in favour of withdrawal; 40 per cent of continuing the war; 6 per cent undecided.
	3 September	Ho Chi Minh dies aged 79.
	4 October	US Morgan Poll: 58 per cent believe the war is a mistake.
	15 October	Massive anti-war demonstration occurs in Washington, D.C..
1970	22 April	Government announces one Battalion to be withdrawn.
	4 May	Kent State incident.
	8 May	Approximately 120,000 march in the first Moratorium March in Sydney, and approximately 70, 000 in Melbourne.
	18 September	Second Moratorium Marches in Sydney of 100,000 and Melbourne 50,000. More than 300 arrested.
1971	10 March	William McMahon succeeds as Prime Minister.
	30 March	1000 men withdrawn.
	30 June	Third and final large anti-war march, 110,000 people.
	18 August	McMahon announces that most troops will be home by Christmas.
	17 December	Last major troop withdrawal.

1972	2 December	Australian Labor Party wins Government. Whitlam becomes Prime Minister.
	5 December	National Service ended; imprisoned Draft Resisters released.
	8 December	Last Australian troops leave Vietnam.
	18 December	Last advisers leave. Nixon renews bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong.
1973	23 January	Nixon announces "peace with honor".
	27 January	Ceasefire.
	26 February	Whitlam announces the establishment of diplomatic relations with Hanoi, but retains diplomatic recognition of South Vietnam.
	29 March	Last American troops leave Vietnam.
1974	4 January	South Vietnam's President Nguyen Van Thieu announces that war has been declared again.
1975	17 April	Phnom Penh falls to Khmer Rouge.
	25 April	Australian embassy in Saigon is closed.
	30 April	Fall of Saigon.
	11 November	Sir John Kerr, the Governor General, "sacks" the Whitlam Labor Government, appoints Malcolm Fraser, Liberal leader as "caretaker" Prime Minister.
	December	Fraser wins government. 1000 Indochinese refugees resettled.
1976	April	First Vietnamese Boat people arrive in Australia.

1978		Fraser Government introduces refugee component into immigration programme.
1982		Arrival of the first Vietnamese migrants under the Orderly Departure Programme. Vietnam Veterans Counselling Service established.
1983	June	4000 American veterans begin class action in New York State against the manufacturer of Agent Orange. Justice John Phillip Evatt charged with the Royal Commission into the mortality of veterans.
1984		The AVHS mortality report published.
1985	July	Evatt Royal Commission published finding Agent Orange "Not Guilty". Vietnam Veterans Association rejects findings.
1987	4 October	25,000 March in Sydney Welcome Home March.
1989	July	At the Geneva Conference on refugees, Australia votes with ASEAN nations for the mandatory repatriation of Vietnamese refugees. Australia is committed to resettle 11,000 people during 1989-1992.
	June-July	First Cambodian boat people arrive in Australia.
1990		Two more Cambodian boats arrive.

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