

Tom Koutsantonis MP
Acting Minister for Veterans Affairs

Friday 18 August 2023

Commemorating 50 years since the end of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War

Today we commemorate Vietnam Veterans Day and acknowledge 50 years since the end of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War.

After 10 years of enduring difficult conditions in the rice paddies and jungles of South Vietnam undertaking dangerous operations against the Viet Cong, the last Australian units were withdrawn on 30 June 1973.

More than 60,000 brave Australians served in Vietnam, but sadly 523 never returned home. More than 3,000 more were wounded, many still wearing physical and mental battle scars to this day.

Vietnam battles including Long Tan, Coral and Balmoral, Binh Ba and The Tet Offensive have been carved into Australia's history as major conflicts that had a profound impact on those serving and those who supported them from the home front.

Australia's involvement in the war was controversial at times, and those who were fortunate to return home faced negativity and criticism, amplifying the devastation.

South Australians are invited to join the Vietnam veteran community at a commemorative service today at 11am to recognise this significant anniversary. A group of leading Vietnam veteran ex-service organisations are collaborating to deliver the service, which will be held at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial at Torrens Parade Ground.

At 3pm, the time at which the Battle of Long Tan commenced on 18 August 1966, a Reflection Service will be held at the Memorial. Red and yellow roses symbolising the colours of the Vietnamese flag will be placed on the memorial by members of the public to remember and honour those who died in the battle.

More information about the 50th anniversary commemorative service can be found on the RSL SA/NT website at rslsa.org.au/vietnam-50th-anniversary

Lest we forget.

Quotes attributable to Tom Koutsantonis

Today we reflect on Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War and how the conflict shaped Australia and its people.

Sadly, for many the battle didn't end in Vietnam. Vietnam veterans have continued to fight for fair and meaningful outcomes for their comrades and those who have served since.

Today we acknowledge this tireless work and thank those who served and continue to serve to this day.

Quotes attributable to Mal Thiele, President, Vietnam Veterans' Federation

It is important that we recognise the service of Vietnam veterans and take the time to honour the 523 Australians who didn't make it home and ensure they are never forgotten.

On this significant anniversary, I encourage the South Australian community to join Vietnam veterans and their families to remember those who fought, those who didn't return and those who were forever affected by their service.