

CONTACT !

Easter Edition



*Blue Mountains Vietnam Veterans and
Associated Forces Inc.
Newsletter*

April 2009

CONTACT !

© JOURNAL OF BLUE MOUNTAINS VIETNAM VETERANS & ASSOCIATED FORCES INC.
incorporating RAAF VIETNAM ASSN. & QANTAS "SKIPPY SQUADRON" ASSN.

ABN 74 645 329 198

CFN 17276

THE ASSOCIATION FOR THOSE WHO SERVED IN ALL POST WORLD WAR II CONFLICTS

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Your Committee

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<i>Yard Maintenance</i>	<i>Peter Jones</i>	<i>tel (02) 4751 8833</i>
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<i>John Woolley</i>		<i>tel (02) 4754 3015</i>
<i>Padre Bill Wheeler</i>		<i>tel (02) 4754 4575</i>

17 May	14 June
12 July	9 August
13 September	11 October

2009 Committee Meeting Dates
All meetings commence 1000hrs at
Legacy Office, Raymond Lane
Springwood

Welfare Officers

John Fenton (L2) - Blue Mountains and Southern Highlands,
Home: 02 4647 9742
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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Another Annual General Meeting has come and gone. It was a pleasing turnout seeing that a lot of Anzac Day Services were also on the same day.

Much more pleasing was that all the positions were filled. There were 3 changes –

John Fenton as Secretary. John has been doing the job for the last few months.
Ray Westwell is our Welfare Advocate and Roger Lawlor as Treasurer. Welcome aboard. This will take a great weight off Glenn Daly's and my shoulders.

The mid-year raffle tickets will be out with this **Contact !** edition if you have not indicated that you don't wish to receive them, same deal – we don't necessarily expect you to personally buy them but rather sell them to friends, families or acquaintances. Also if you can't sell them please don't be embarrassed to simply return them and we will reuse them.

The AGM passed the proposal that we down size the Memorial Day activities. Broadly speaking it would just be an appropriate service at the Springwood War Memorial and then hopefully everyone will retire to the new Springwood Sports Club for a BBQ and liquid refreshment all under the same roof. The club has offered us full use of the club facilities, which is great.

We have gone this way for the following reasons:

Less VIPs, less work for the committee and less work for our own members so as they can enjoy their own Memorial Day. More on this later.

From the Welfare Front I am led to believe that the number of cases we are looking after has not changed a lot from the previous report. Our duly voted in Welfare Co-ordinator, Ray Westwell, has accepted the task but is currently away for some pre embarkation leave. Ray will be physically in the chair very soon and will grace us with his reporting and co-ordinating on his return from Villers Bretonneux, Welcome aboard Ray.

Cheers

Jack Lake

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Brian Day continues his series on
Australian and other VC winners .

**AUSTRALIAN ARMY
AWARDED THE VICTORIA CROSS FOR AUSTRALIA
TROOPER MARK GREGOR DONALDSON**



***F*or most conspicuous acts of gallantry in action in a circumstance of great peril in Afghanistan as part of the Special Operations Task Group during Operation SLIPPER, Oruzgan Province, Afghanistan.**

Trooper Mark Gregor Donaldson enlisted into the Australian Army on 18 June 2002. After completing Recruit, Initial and Employment Training he was posted to the 1st Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment. Having successfully completed the Special Air Service Selection Course in April 2004, Trooper Donaldson was posted to Special Air Service Regiment in May 2004.

On 2 September 2008, during the conduct of a fighting patrol, Trooper Donaldson was travelling in a combined Afghan, US and Australian vehicle convoy that was engaged by a numerically superior, entrenched and coordinated enemy ambush. The ambush was initiated by a high volume of sustained machine gun fire coupled with the effective use of rocket propelled grenades. Such was the effect of the initiation that the combined patrol suffered numerous casualties, completely lost the initiative and became immediately suppressed. It was over two hours before the convoy was able to establish a clean break and move to an area free of enemy fire.

In the early stages of the ambush, Trooper Donaldson reacted spontaneously to regain the initiative. He moved rapidly between alternate positions of cover engaging the enemy with 66mm and 84mm anti-armour weapons as well as his M4 rifle. During an early stage of the enemy ambush, he deliberately exposed himself to enemy fire in order to draw attention to himself and thus away from wounded soldiers. This selfless act alone bought enough time for those wounded to be moved to relative safety of the vehicles then provided immediate first aid before returning to the fight.

Continued page 7



VIETNAM VETERAN & COMMUNITY CHOIR



A Vietnam Veterans' community Choir named 'Veteran Soul' has recently been formed by an ex- Artillery gunner, Francis Edwards. Francis was with 106th Field Battery, 4th Field Regiment (SVN 1970 -1971). With his long time interest and involvement in the music industry, Francis has headed up and placed the Choir well on the way to being a great success. The choir consists of Vets from the three Service Arms, their partners, children and grand children. The choir's charter is to act as a visible voice promoting the Vietnam Veteran's community as a group who are ready and willing to support all others in need through the uplifting power of song. Veteran Soul is available to perform free of charge at charity functions of all types in the form of being an auxiliary source of entertainment at fundraising events. The Choir has performed once at the Sydney Wesley Mission in late 2008; however, has also been invited to perform at four gigs in the first half of this year; they also hope to record a CD later this year.

The first gig of 2009 was for the official opening of the 2009 exhibition 'Nam Bang' held in the Casula Power House Art Centre, Casula NSW; the choir provided eight numbers to a host of guests including the Minister for Veterans' Affairs the Honourable Alan Griffin and the opposition Shadow Minister Mrs. Louise Markus; plus a host of returned vets and Vietnamese sponsors. A great night was had by all (despite the woeful sound system), the choir is now blooded and ready to go again.

For Choir gig schedule: **Web site: www.bmvets.com.au** . All Vietnam veterans and their family members are welcome to join the choir and interested vets can contact Francis at franced@bigpond.net.au or by telephone on 9660 2595 or mobile 0458 993 268.

ASSOCIATION 20th ANNIVERSARY PORT CROCKS, NECKTIES, CAPS & STUBBY HOLDERS

Association port crocks (\$30.00), neckties (\$20.00), caps (navy in colour with matching green association name embroidered or if you wish with an embroidered association logo, one size fits all \$10), screen printed association stubby holders (\$5), all inclusive of GST, are now available from the secretary.

Mail orders are very welcome. Please allow sufficient funds in your cheque/money order to cover postage.

BMVV&AF NEW QUALITY SHIRTS

Association new style quality embroidered poly-cotton polo style shirts with pockets (in 4 colours, white, light blue, navy and bottle green and in 3 sizes L, XL, and XXL \$25 inclusive of GST, are now available from the secretary during normal business hours 10.00am to 2.00pm Monday and Thursday only.

Mail orders are very welcome. Please allow sufficient funds in your cheque/money order to cover postage.



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PADRE'S CORNER

*“They shall grow not old, as we who are left grow old;
age shall not weary them nor the years condemn...”*

We are all slowing down with age, various ailments and physical restrictions but I guess most of us thank God that we were not called on to actually die as some of our mates and many others did in war and preparing for war. They did not get the chance to live fuller lives and enjoy family and friends the way we have.

We honour that sacrifice they made whenever and wherever it was. They each have responded to the call of their ‘Last Post’.

Another quotation we usually look at in ANZAC and Memorial Services come from The Good Book.

*“Greater love has no-one than this,
that one lay down his life for his friends”*
(JOHN 15:13)

This is applied of course, appropriately, to the men and women we remember and honour. Originally it was Jesus who said these words about himself and referred to the sacrifice he was to make for us – He called us his friends if we believe in him.

I recently conducted the funeral of an ex RN ‘er’ who had served in the North Atlantic, The Mediterranean, The Pacific and at Normandy and who had married an Australian girl and settled here. At his funeral we were asked to pause and consider that we too will someday, sooner or later, have to answer our ‘Last Post’ call.

The question is “Will you be ready for it?”

Jesus said to his friends;

*“In my Father’s house are many rooms....
I am going to prepare a place for you”*
(JOHN 14:2)

and further;

*“Greater love has no one than this,
that one lay down his life for his friends.
You are my friends if you do what I command.
Love one another“*
(JOHN 15:13, 14, 17)

Thank God for those who have gone before us and pray that we can make this a better world by following the way and the teaching of Jesus.

Bill Wheeler
02 47544575

There is no smaller a package on earth than a man that is wrapped in himself.

VC Winners continued from page 4

As the enemy had employed the tactic of a rolling ambush, the patrol was forced to conduct numerous vehicle manoeuvres under intense enemy fire, over a distance of approximately four kilometres to extract the convoy from the engagement area. Compounding the extraction was the fact that casualties had consumed all available space within the vehicles. Those who had not been wounded, including Trooper Donaldson, were left with no option but to run beside the vehicles throughout. During the conduct of this vehicle manoeuvre to extract the convoy from the engagement area, a severely wounded coalition force interpreter was inadvertently left behind. Of his own volition and displaying complete disregard for his own safety, Trooper Donaldson moved alone, on foot, across approximately 80 metres of exposed ground to recover the wounded interpreter. His movement, once identified by the enemy, drew intense and accurate machine gun fire from entrenched positions. Upon reaching the wounded coalition force interpreter, Trooper Donaldson picked him up and carried him back to the relative safety of the vehicles then provided immediate first aid before returning to the fight.

On subsequent occasions during the battle, Trooper Donaldson administered medical care to other wounded soldiers, whilst continually engaging the enemy. Trooper Donaldson's acts of exceptional gallantry in the face of accurate and sustained enemy fire ultimately saved the life of a coalition force interpreter and ensured the safety of the other members of the combined Afghan, US and Australian force. Trooper Donaldson's actions on this day displayed exceptional courage in circumstances of great peril. His actions are of the highest accord and are in keeping with the finest traditions of the Special Operations Command, the Australian Army and the Australian Defence Force.

Personal biography of Trooper Mark Gregor Donaldson, VC

Mark Donaldson was born in Waratah, Newcastle, NSW on 2 April 1979. He spent his formative years in northern NSW where he graduated from high school in 1996. Trooper Donaldson enlisted into the Australian Army on 18 June 2002 and entered recruit training at the Army Recruit Training Centre, Kapooka, NSW. He demonstrated an early aptitude for soldiering and was awarded the prizes for best shot and best at physical training in his platoon. Subsequently he was allocated to the Royal Australian Infantry Corps and posted to the school of infantry at Singleton, NSW, where he excelled in his initial employment training. At the completion of this training he was again awarded best shot and best at physical training, as well as the award for the most outstanding soldier in his platoon.

He was posted to 1st battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, Townsville, QLD in November 2002. It was during this time that Trooper Donaldson decided to pursue his ambition to join the Special Air Service Regiment. In February 2004, he successfully completed the Special Air Service Regiment selection course and was posted to the regiment in May 2004. He was then posted to I Troop, 3 Special Air Service Squadron. Since that time he has been deployed on operations to East Timor, Afghanistan and Iraq. On 12 August 2008, Trooper Donaldson was wounded in action whilst conducting night time operations in Oruzgan Province, Afghanistan. He recovered from his minor wounds and continued on the deployment. Trooper Donaldson was involved in an incident on 2 September 2008 in Oruzgan Province, Afghanistan that resulted in him being awarded the Victoria Cross for Australia. He was invested by her Excellency the Governor-General of Australia at Government House, Canberra on 16 January 2009. Trooper Donaldson remains posted to the Special Air Service Regiment in Perth, WA. Trooper Donaldson is married to Emma and has a daughter Kaylee. His parents are deceased.

Brian Day

Vale



Monsignor John Grannall MBE
Various RAAF Bases 1965 — 1976
30 Aug 1931 — 29 Dec 2008



Mr. John Warwick Downes
213822 Warrant Officer Class One
12 Field Regiment, 104 Field Battery
17 Nov 1940 — 06 Apr 2009



Mr. Geoffrey Way
A316784 Warrant Officer 35SQN RAAF
3 Nov 1946 — 26 Mar 2009

Lest We Forget

Monsignor John (Grassy) Grannall - by Ron Bidwell 5th Jan 2009

In Canowindra he was born and raised,
and 'twas there he was ordained.
For fifty years (or more) the Lord he praised,
in God's service he remained.

All throughout the Central West
and the Central Tablelands,
his parishioners were truly blessed
under his strong and caring hands.

And, with the RAAF from '65,
as a Chaplain, he served ten years.
Then in Vung Tau, when he did arrive
the orphans' plight evoked some tears.

For these children—scared—emaciated,
despair etched with pain upon each face.
He built an orphanage, with goods "donated",
from a nearby U.S. Military base.

He was a God send to these strays,
and accepted graciously.
His country's well deserved praise,
when awarded the MBE.

"Grassy" was a sporting man,
Rugby League his favourite game.
Happy among his football clan,
He sought neither accolades or fame.

To many towns, Portland 'specially,
his passing is a tragic loss,
but we all understand that he
has finally gone to meet his Boss.

A big thanks to Ron Bidwell (Portland RSL Sub-branch) who has allowed me to add these beautiful words in poem,
a tribute to Father John.

Find a Mate

If anyone is looking for old friends please drop a line to the Editor and your request will go out to our members for help through **Contact!** Remember 600 Listening Posts are better than one researcher.

***** **ATTENTION ALL MEMBERS** *****

Now that the 2009 AGM has been held and the dust has settled, all members should be aware of who holds the Committee positions. Firstly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank those departing the posts and congratulate those who are now our elected Committee. Secondly, may I ask again for any additional members interested in having their names registered to receive **Contact !** electronically instead of by the Snail Mail system. The Committee would appreciate if members currently receiving **Contact !** electronically and planning to change providers or know of someone that has, please advise the secretary of your new email address. For those that have no access to a computer do not be alarmed, the hard copy will always be made available through the post. A reminder to all that at any time anyone with an internet connection can go to our website (www.bmvets.com.au) and view current and archived issues. If you have any problems in this area please contact our Web Site Manager. *The Editor*

Gotta love being Aussie

The following are results from an OZ-words Competition where entrants were asked to take an Australian word, alter it by one letter only, and supply a witty definition.

Clearly, you need to be an Aussie to understand.

Billabonk: to make passionate love beside a water hole.

Bludgie: a partner who doesn't work, but is kept as a pet.

Dodgeridoo: a fake indigenous artefact.

Fair drinkum: good-quality Aussie wine.

Flatypus: a cat that has been run over by a vehicle.

Shagman: an unemployed male, roaming the Australian bush in search of sexual activity.

Yabble: the unintelligible language of Australian freshwater crustaceans.

Bushwanker: a pretentious drongo, who reckons he's above average when it comes to handling himself in the scrub.

Crackie-daks: 'hipster' tracksuit pants. And for the Kiwi's amongst us.

Shornbag: a particularly attractive naked sheep.

Mateshit: all your flat mate's belongings, lying strewn around the floor.

Thanks to Mr. A. Nonymous

SEARCHING FOR INFORMATION ON AUSTRALIAN MEDAL RECIPIENTS?

Then you should try www.itsanhonour.gov.au
This site has information on honours to Australians including the Order of Australia, Victoria Cross, Distinguished Service Cross and the Centenary of Federation Medal. The website also includes a database of recipients.

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The anniversary of Springwood Foundation Day caused the usual disturbance to the sleepy hamlet. Featuring numerous stalls of all kind and the second largest Street Parade next to the Long Tan Memorial Day. The BMVV&AF have in the past year or so used the parade to lift our Volunteer Mowing Service profile in the mountains area and also gives us an opportunity to meet the locals and also have our own memorabilia stall, below. This year and last year we were sponsored by the owner of the Royal Hotel, special thanks to David Younan for his generosity. The new Triton dual cab, trailer and mowers (below) are courtesy of the Department of Veterans' Affairs, a special thanks must go to Alan Griffin and his staffers, particularly Marilyn Bell who has always given us a lot of support in administrative aspects.



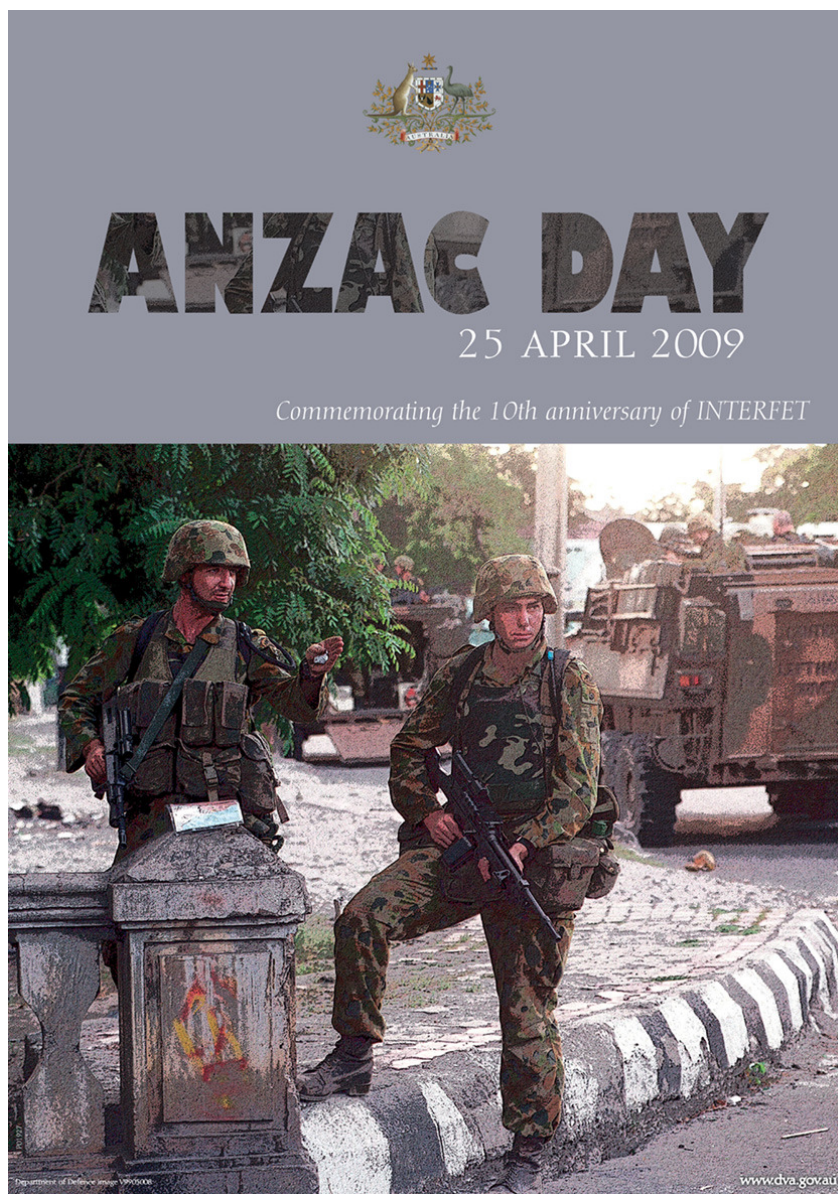
Looking pristine is the new Triton Dual Cab proudly for the not so pristine Pete Jones and his faithful good looking side kick Alan Braid. These blokes are known throughout the Mountains for their tireless ground maintenance work for Vets. As an aside Greg Meek was the main player in the horse trading for the new Triton and trailer (I told you Greg, they wouldn't take Pete and Alan as part of the trade in) .

ANZAC DAY 2009

Another year has passed and ANZAC Day is close upon us, this year the Federal Government will again hold an official Anzac Day Dawn Service on the Western Front. This now annual service, will also join those organised in Gallipoli, Hellfire Pass, Sandakan and Isurava. The Federal Government also recognize that this year marks 93 years since the first ANZACs arrived on the Western Front from Gallipoli.

Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Mr Alan Griffin said, et al, that "... this year marks ten years since Australia led the INTERFET operation in East Timor - restoring peace to a territory torn apart by political violence," and further added that "East Timor was a milestone in Australia's military history."

Australia's efforts in restoring peace to East Timor have been immortalized in this year's ANZAC Day commemorative poster which was unveiled by Mr. Griffin, The poster features a striking image of Australian soldiers patrolling in the streets of Dili, on 2 October 1999.



One of the soldiers featured in the poster, former Private Paul Everett, joined Mr. Griffin at the Australian War Memorial for the unveiling of the poster.

INTERESTED IN HELPING LEGACY?

Blue Mountains Division of Sydney Legacy is in desperate need of legatees to service the Blue Mountains area. Legacy was founded in 1926 by returned servicemen to care for the dependants of deceased comrades who served Australia in any operational area; those who were killed in action or who have since died.

Interested ?
 contact Vicky Barnes
 (02) 4751 5994.
 Monday to Thursday only

For information all members courtesy of the Department of Defence

DEFGRAM NO 150/2009 26 March 2009

Note: DEFGRAMS need only be retained while the information is relevant. Publications can be accessed on the Defence Intranet at <http://intranet.defence.gov.au/home/documents/departme.htm>

RECLASSIFICATION OF DEFENCE COOPERATION PROGRAM SERVICE IN EAST TIMOR

Service by Defence Cooperation Program (DCP) personnel in East Timor between the period 16 September 1999 and 17 August 2003 has been reclassified as warlike.

This means that those who were involved in the Army Training Support Team — East Timor and other DCP tasks are now eligible to be awarded the Australian Active Service Medal (AASM) with clasp East Timor and Returned from Active Service badge (RASB).

Personnel who served in East Timor under DCP arrangements should apply to Defence Honours and Awards (DH&A) using the form Application for the Issue of Medals that is available on the DH&A website www.defence.gov.au/medals or by calling DH&A on 1800 111 321 (toll free). To assist the assessment process members should ensure that their PMKeyS Ops Log reflects their DCP service in East Timor. The upgrade of the Australian Service Medal (ASM) to the AASM requires the ASM to be returned before the AASM is dispatched, unless the ASM has been awarded for another operation. Those who already hold the AASM will be issued the clasp after returning the ASM if required. Members will be advised on their particular requirements. The RASB will be issued with the AASM if not previously issued for other qualifying service. Qualification for both the AASM and ASM on a single rotation is not permitted.

Signed

W. TRAYNOR

Assistant Secretary Personnel Support Services Defence Support Group

CONTACT OFFICER: Mr David Williams

Supervisor Current Operations T-4-1F

Department of Defence

CANBERRA ACT 2600

Have you got something to advertise ? got something to contribute?; photos, short story, yarns.
 Don't hang back Email or contact Graham (the Editor) through the Association Secretary.

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MEMORIAL DAY 2009

STOP PRESS

This year, our 43rd commemoration of the Battle of Long Tan will be held on Sunday 16th August. We are proud to announce that our Guest of Honour will be our own, **WOII Keith Payne VC OAM;** Vietnam 1969, one of Australia's three surviving VC winners including (Edward (Ted) Kenna 1945 Wewak New Guinea and our latest modest VC Winner Trooper Mark Gregor Donaldson 2008 Oruzgan Province, Afghanistan).

Over the past 12 months the Committee has been at odds with the current Memorial Day format. With much soul searching and argument a proposal to alter the format to be more Member / Digger Oriented has been passed by the Committee. President Jack will be better placed to advise how the ethos and concept will come together and he will ensure that this will be further expanded in the June issue of **CONTACT!**.

STOP PRESS

The problem with people who have no vices is that generally you can be pretty sure they're going to have some pretty annoying virtues.

A note from our VVCS friends

Articles and events from the recently published VVCS Calendar will be published in **CONTACT!** for those of us that still need the occasional assistance and / or reassurance from these very caring and capable people.

For the immediate months there are several Programmes mentioned in the VVCS Programme Calendar to consider, they are:

"Sleep and Relaxation":- Thursday 14th May, Campbelltown NSW.

"Pain Management" :- Saturday 9th May, Sydney, NSW

"Heart Health" :- TBA , this appears to be a big programme and due to its depth has yet to be given a start time.

And not forgetting our younger veterans, a programme titled **"Stepping Out"** run over two days, Monday 22nd and Tuesday 23rd, June is being programmed for ADF Members and their Partners to be held in the Sydney Region.

These Operation Life Workshops are there to assist all of us and our families, please give these programmes your support. For further information on any of the above Programmes **contact your nearest centre on 1800 011 046**

'VIETNAM DREAMSCAPE' THE CONCERT

CASULA POWERHOUSE ART CENTRE
THURSDAY 11th JUNE 8:00 – 9:30 PM
Casula Road, Casula (directly opposite the Casula Rail Station)
2007 UBD Reference: Map 268 N–16 , 269 A-16

The 'Vietnam Dreamscape' Concert is an extension to the existing **Nam Bang** exhibition and the first half of the evening features the first ever live public performance of the songs from the CD album Vietnam Dreamscape by singer/songwriter Francis Edwards who also leads 'Veteran Soul' The Vietnam Veterans Community Choir. This charity function is being produced by we Vietnam veterans in order to assist the good work of Father Chris Riley for his **Kids off the Streets Programme**.

The second half of the show features the formal introductory performance for **Veteran Soul** along with the additional feature possibility of two major, well known names joining us on the same bill.

While we are all very much aware of the problems that have beset Veterans and their families for so long (we're all in that boat) we need also recognize the might of our collective power in being able to do what we can in support of the new homeless of our fair country.

Your individual support is extremely important to us all, so please come along. We in the choir have had a few 'live practise' Gigs but this one is truly a big one and meets our resolve to assist charities wherever possible and in particular, those who care for the homeless from all generations.

DONT MISS OUT! BE THERE AMONG YOUR FELLOW VETS FOR A GREAT EVENING OF ENTERTAINMENT AND SHOW FATHER RILEY HOW VIETNAM VETS STILL HAVE SO MUCH TO OFFER IN SUPPORT OF OTHER'S NEEDS!

Tickets only \$10.00

The beautiful Casula Art Centre theatre is limited to 350 seats.
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