David Harris
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty
Minister for Gaming and Racing
Minister for Veterans
Minister for Medical Research
Minister for the Central Coast

Media Release
Veterans remembered 51 years since Australia's withdrawal from Vietnam War

Sunday 18 August 2024

Images of Australian soldiers in action during the Vietnam War available here

Minister for Veterans David Harris will stand alongside Vietnam veterans at the Cenotaph from 11am today to pay tribute to the service and sacrifice of those who served in one of Australia's longest military engagements.

Vietnam Veterans Day takes place on 18 August, originally to acknowledge the Battle of Long Tan which took place in 1966, and resulted in 18 Australian deaths and 24 wounded after three hours of fierce fighting before the withdrawal of the Viet Cong.

The day is now used to more broadly remember the service and sacrifice of all who fought in Vietnam.

The arrival of the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam during July and August 1962 was the beginning of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War.

The majority of this deployment comprised army personnel, but significant numbers of air force and navy personnel, and some civilians also took part. During its 11 years of involvement, more than 60,000 Australians fought in Vietnam, at a cost of 523 who died and almost 2,400 wounded.

Vietnam veteran and RSL NSW immediate past President Ray James, will attend today's commemoration to reflect on the contributions he and his Navy comrades made during his service.

Mr James was one of 50 veterans from Vietnam whose stories were published by the Anzac Memorial last year during the 50th anniversary of Australia's extraction from Vietnam. Read more about Ray's service here.

Minister for Veterans David Harris said:

"Today we come together to pay tribute and remember the service and sacrifice of our veterans who fought in Vietnam for more than a decade.

"Over 60,000 Australians fought in Vietnam and sadly 523 gave the ultimate sacrifice. Almost 2,400 were wounded, with all involved carrying the scars and memories that only armed combat can bring.

"We thank them for their service."

Vietnam veteran Ray James said:

"I was 17 on my first trip to Vietnam on HMAS *Sydney*, ferrying troops to and from Vung Tau port.

"Between 1966 and 1968 I did six trips to Vietnam and a seventh in 1972 on HMAS *Torrens*. We'd offload 400 or 500 troops, and we'd bring 400 or 500 troops back home. We sailed with equipment, vehicles, and stores.

"Today we honour those veterans who lost their lives during the battles in Vietnam, returned home wounded, ill, or injured, lost their lives in the years since they returned, and still carry the physical and emotional scars of their service since Australia withdrew from the Vietnam War 51 years ago."

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