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Hon. Austin
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VIETNAM VETERANS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA
NORTHERN TERRITORY BRANCH Inc.
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Dear All,

PRESS RELEASE: 25 Feb 2015

Re: OPERATION - "BRING THEM HOME"

DID YOU KNOW?

25 Australian Soldiers killed in the Vietnam War have never been returned home.

They are buried in Malaysia and Singapore.

521 Australian Soldiers were killed in the Vietnam War, 496 were brought back home to Australia, let's bring the remaining 25 home, to Australia where they belong.

I, Bob Shewring Vice President VVAA NT write to you today as a very proud Vietnam Veteran who is undertaking with the support of the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia (VVAA) to bring the remaining twenty four (24) Australian Vietnam Veteran soldiers buried in Terendak General Christian Cemetery on Terendak Military Base and 1 (one) in Kranji Cemetery Singapore back home to Australia.

It is important to understand that **none** of these soldiers are in Australian or British War Graves.

Hence, operation "Bring Them Home", an initiative of the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia Northern Territory Branch. This project has the full and unanimous support of the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia National Council.

I got involved several years ago in researching how we could bring home the only Northern Territory KIA in Vietnam Cpl Reg Hillier MID, who lived and worked in the NT and is buried in Terendak cemetery. His nephew Neil Bond states that his mother, Reg's sister and nominated next of kin (NOK) were "never contacted in regard to bringing him home".

Further research has indicated that if you could afford 500 pounds the bodies were repatriated. A big ask, considering that in 1965, 500 pounds was half of one years earnings. This anomaly is further compounded by the fact that the first KIA WO2 William HACKING was repatriated back to Australia at Government expense.

Yet the second WO2 Kevin CONWAY was first buried in Siagon, then was exhumed and reburied in Ulu Pandan Cemetery Singapore, then to make way for Singapore's redevelopment, he was dug up again and reburied in Kranji Cemetery Singapore.

This poor guy has been exhumed twice and buried three times and is still not home.

Honour The Dead But Fight Like Hell for the Living

The third KIA was Michael BOURKE and he was buried back in Australia along with the next three KIA's.

From the commencement of the Vietnam War until 24 Feb 1966 a total of 32 soldiers were KIA or died as a result of wounds, of these 11 were buried in Terendak, 2 were MIA, and the other 19 were repatriated, **9 at Government expense** (what made these warranted) and 10 by next-of-kin, (500 pounds). (Hansard H of Reps No.10, 1966 8 Mar 1966, Pg 43 Q. 1444)

This practice smacks of discrimination based on whether widows or relatives could afford to pay the required 500 pounds, if they couldn't they had **no** choice but to have them buried in Terendek, Malaysia. Or if the Government decided to pay, a cruel practice considering all of these soldiers made the same Supreme Sacrifice in doing their job for their country, a terrible shame.

As a result of a Parliamentary decision made on 21 January 1966 all soldiers KIA or who died as a result of wounds were to be repatriated at Government expense back home to Australia. And those that paid the 500 pounds would be repaid, however it was stated that those buried outside of Australia **would not be repatriated**. Although, there have been another 13 buried in Terendak since this promulgation, the last one on 3 Dec 1969.

In Nov 2013 a letter was submitted to the respective Government Minister requesting that permission be given for the repatriation of Cpl Reg Hillier MID from Terendak to Darwin. This was refused along government lines, in that those buried in Terendak prior to Mar 1966 would not be repatriated and that it would set a precedence.

This clinical response greatly disturbed the family and our members, and from that point on I became committed to doing what ever we can do to bring them **all** home. As Reg Hillier's nephew said, "it's the right and proper thing to do". Most Vietnam Veterans and the rest of Australia are unaware that these soldiers are buried "half-way home" and not in recognised war graves.

Bringing them home will bring about closure to the Vietnam Veterans widows, their descendants and for the whole Vietnam Veteran community once and for all, and finally with dignity and honour, lay them to rest, back home in Australia with the rest of the Vietnam War dead. If the Government of the day and the Military commanders followed the precedence set with the first KIA we wouldn't be requesting to "Bring Them Home".

It is our intention to contact every NOK or descendants of the 24 buried in Terendak and the 1 buried in Kranji cemeteries to determine whether they wish to bring their loved ones home, or leave them half-way home, whichever, their wishes will of course be respected.

But if they, like Reg Hillier's family in the NT want the body of their loved one finally brought home, then we will do our utmost to ensure that this happens. In the case of Reg Hillier, this means to be buried in the Adelaide River War Cemetery in the Northern Territory. The only land based War Cemetery in Australia, apart from the Australian War Memorial, the burial site of the "Unknown Soldier".

Keith Payne, VC our living legend Vietnam Veteran has given us his full support to our project and stated "I agree with you, where the relatives want the bodies brought home, - Bring the Bodies Home."

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The negative, clinical response made by the Australian Government in relation to repatriating our Vietnam War dead home is totally unacceptable by today's standards.

See list of Vietnam Veterans next page that we wish to repatriate providing the NOK or descendants want it to happen.

Let's finally bring closure to this unfortunate set of circumstances in our great Military history, and right this terrible wrong for all the widows, relatives, descendants and the huge extended Vietnam Veteran community, by bringing this operation to fruition, and finally

“Bring Them Home”.

Your Sincerely



Bob Shewring

Project Director - “Bring Them Home”
Vice President - Vietnam Veterans
Association of Australia NT Branch
bringthemhome@vvaant.org.au

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Brief Background:

Australia deployed over 60,000 servicemen and women to the conflict in Vietnam between 1962 and 1975, the nation's longest operational commitment. During the course of the Vietnam War, 521 Australians lost their lives. The most of these were repatriated to Australia for burial.

The first recorded KIA was that of HACKING William F 36448 Sgt/WO2 on 1 June 1963, he was returned to Australia at Government (Public) expense for burial at Springvale Cemetery Vic. Research shows that prior to 24 May 1966 when the first National Service soldier was killed, 36 soldiers were killed, of these 12 were buried outside of Australia in Terandak Military Cemetery. Since then another 13 have been buried in Terandak Military Cemetery, the last one was interred on the 3 Dec 1969.

We request your support to **Petition the Prime Minister**, so please visit our Petition site www.bringthemhome.org.au and register your support every signature will help our cause. We also need financial support to "Bring Them Home" please donate what you can here to make this happen. www.bringthemhome.org.au
Facebook – www.facebook.com/operationbringthemhome - please like and forward on.

If you know NOK or the Relatives of those listed below please email bringthemhome@vvaant.org.au

List of Vietnam Veterans buried outside of Australia

VIETNAM VETERAN'S ROLL OF HONOUR KRANJI CEMETERY SINGAPORE

CONWAY Kevin 13097 Warrant Officer 2 6 Jul 1964 AATTVN RAINF

VIETNAM VETERAN'S ROLL OF HONOUR TERANDAK CEMETERY MALAYSIA

SMITH Francis J	37003	Corporal	21 Sep 1965	1 RAR
FIELD Ronald E	214479	Private	9 Oct 1965	1 RAR
ROSS Thomas	212612	Lance Corporal	12 Oct 1965	1 RAR
HILLIER Reginald H MID	40774	Corporal	29 Nov 1965	1 RAR B Coy
SIMPSON Thomas	36205	Gunner	9 Dec 1965	Artillery 105 FB
CLARK Christopher	215215	Private	8 Jan 1966	1 RAR
HORNE Neville W	215217	Private	8 Jan 1966	1 RAR
WILSON Mervyn A F	213780	Private	8 Jan 1966	1 RAR
BOWTELL Robert W	213151	Corporal	11 Jan 1966	3 FIELD TROOP RAE
LEES Ronald V	26182	Warrant Officer 2	13 Jan 1966	AATTV RAA
PHILLIPS Thomas D	42352	Warrant Officer 2	20 Mar 1966	AATTV RAAC
RUDUSS Arthur	3410295	Lance Corporal	12 Jun 1966	AA HQ 1 Task Force
HOLLAND Tony	3786634	Trooper	7 Jul 1966	RAA 3 Cav 1APC SQN
CHECKLEY Thomas W	311534	Gunner	5 Aug 1966	Artillery 131 Loc Bat
HANLEY Maxwell P MM	43593	Warrant Officer 2	20 Feb 1967	AATTV
BADCOE Peter J VC	41400	Major	7 Apr 1967	AATTVN RAINF
ALLEN Norman G	2784699	Private	10 Nov 1967	7 RAR
BIRSE Robert	215349	Lieutenant	10 Dec 1967	Artillery 4 field Reg
PEARCE John G S	2784043	Corporal	14 May 1968	1 RAR
ABBOT Dal E	2786017	Private	30 May 1968	1 RAR
CARROLL Ronald T	14208	Sergeant	4 Aug 1968	3 RAR
GARRIGAN John	310089	Warrant Officer 2	27 Dec 1968	AATTV RAA
ARCHER Gary A	2788583	Private	4 Feb 1969	9 RAR
JELLIE Allan D	39510	2nd Lieutenant	3 Dec 1969	AA Aviation Corps

Let's "BRING THEM HOME"

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