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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.