



national  
vietnam  
veterans  
museum

**Visit Us:**

25 Veterans Drive,  
Newhaven,  
Phillip Island, Vic 3925

**Mail:**

PO Box 318,  
San Remo  
Vic 3925

**Tel:** (03) 5956 6400

ABN 34 133 827 308

Federal Minister for Health & our local Federal Member for Flinders, Greg Hunt MP

Our patron: AVM Alan Reed AO (ret'd)

The mayor of Bass Coast Shire, Pamela Rothfield, CEO Paul Buckley, and Councillors

Vietnam Veterans

Volunteers and staff of the Museum

Distinguished guests, ladies & gentlemen

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The longest journey starts with the smallest step, and for this Museum, our journey started with John & Krishna Methven towing a trailer around Australia telling the story of the Vietnam War.

Throughout that journey and the years ahead the collection has grown from the contribution of artefacts and memorabilia from Veterans and their families

Almost 60,000 Australians served in Vietnam and any one of them could have had the passion, commitment and dedication to have established the National Vietnam Veterans Museum and it could have been anywhere in Australia. But it wasn't founded by just anyone and it wasn't founded just anywhere. We know the story but John & Krishna started this journey and supported by a large team over the years, have achieved this incredible Museum we have today.

People have asked me why it isn't in Melbourne. I had the good fortune in younger life of living in regional Australia and I would say to you that if you subscribe to everything being in the mainland capital cities we would have no regional towns, no regional farmlands, and no tourist trail beyond the outer suburbs of Sydney & Melbourne.



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But it's more than that – it has taken passion, commitment and dedication to establish, develop and grow this Museum beyond all odds, and we could relocate it - but we could never replicate it !

In some ways our location reflects the isolation from mainstream society felt by many Vietnam Veterans, but the soul of this place could never be closer to the spirit of our veterans.

It's heart and soul is here and this is the spiritual home of Vietnam Veterans and it's here to stay !

This Museum is a cathartic place for veterans to remember, talk, and reflect on a time and place that so significantly impacted their lives.

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Let there be no doubt - Vietnam Veterans are different.

They were sent to Vietnam at the behest of their Federal Government and they served with distinction and pride only to return to an ungrateful nation.

Military personnel by nature rely upon each other to have their backs in the field of combat, and they rely upon their command structure to have their backs in general.

The command structure goes all the way to the Government of the Day and successive Governments turned their backs on our men and women and left them to have to defend themselves amongst a hostile society.

Vietnam Veterans did the only thing they could do – they turned to each other for support

The adage “leave no man behind” doesn't just mean in the field of battle, it means in life in general and so every day they live their motto: “Honour the dead, but fight like hell for the Living”

The rest of us would find it hard to comprehend or understand the depth of friendship, comraderie, and the sense of mutual responsibility that exists between Vietnam Veterans



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The more they were put down the stronger they became

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The work we are doing at this Museum is becoming more urgent as every day passes and this is evidenced by the fact that this past year we have lost two of the five Vietnam Veterans serving on our Board.

I have never heard a Vietnam Veteran ask for a hand out – all they seek is “respect” and this timely contribution by the Turnbull Federal Government, from their ultimate commander in chief, is not only a mark of deep respect, but is also a tremendous contribution towards the legacy of Vietnam Veterans. It is also a very strong endorsement for regional Australia, for regional Victoria, for volunteers and for veterans at large.

I particularly want to thank the Minister, Greg Hunt – he has one of the busiest portfolios in cabinet, but he has always remained true to his local constituency despite his heavy workload. It was June 5, 2017 that I asked for his support to have the Federal Government become our cornerstone stakeholder and contribute \$5m. I know firsthand that he has worked tirelessly and fought hard to get us these funds, and I want to thank him personally, and also his members of staff for their hard work.

These funds will be used for the purchase of further land, Museum design, preparation, and for infrastructure such as roads, water, sewer, communications, and access.

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On this occasion I also want to thank Mr. Rod Patch and his consortium who have donated 5 acres of land on the airport site to assist our expansion. I want to thank the Mayor, General Manager & staff of Bass Coast shire for their unwavering support.

Colin Grey and the Oceania team who source, conserve and maintain our fleet of aircraft and equipment, all our volunteers, our very able staff led by our GM Phil Dressing, and my fellow Board members, for their passion, commitment and dedication – thank you !



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To our Vietnam Veterans for sticking with us and believing in us – this is your home, your place, and always will be !

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Our task now is to deliver the dream, and present our Vietnam Veterans in a light, which does them and their future generations justice, and reinforces their pride in their service and sacrifice.

Our aim for this new Museum is to create a place that seeks to remember, interpret and relate the experience of the veterans of the Vietnam War and the enduring impact of the war on Australian society.

We are not a memorial of war, we are a custodian of their stories, this will be a place of commemoration, of undeniable truth, of implicit trust, of pilgrimage, a resting place for our dead and a spiritual home for our living Veterans.

The story of our men and women who served and who sacrificed, in and after Vietnam, must be told accurately, without bias, without politics, and upholding the finest traditions of our defence force

This will be the research centre of excellence & the national library on the Vietnam War

This will be the repository for the stories, the oral histories, artefacts, mementoes and writings of our veterans

This will be the ultimate place where we honour our Vietnam Veterans !

We are charged with an enormous responsibility to protect, preserve and to tell their stories.

What we are doing here is not about bricks and mortar, there is a higher meaning to it and we carry a responsibility and an obligation to get it right. This is holy work !



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This \$5m provided today by the Turnbull Government is the cornerstone for our capital campaign. Our target is \$35m and without Federal Government support we could not be moving forward. This now enables us to talk to the States & Territories, to our allies, to industry stakeholders, to philanthropists and eventually to the Australian public, with confidence and with our Governments endorsement for the future.

There are always people in society who tell you what can't be done – but this museum today is filled with can-do people, people who get off their butts and get things done regardless of the challenges

Some people have said that we'll never raise \$35m to complete this new Museum, that we're simply dreamers. Well I can tell you that I am a dreamer and if I could speak on behalf of Vietnam Veterans I would simply say "Never under-estimate our passion or our tenacity"

Again Minister, to you and the Turnbull Federal Government, thank you for having a strong social conscience, thank you for having soul and for caring – we will use these funds wisely and well !

Minister, I have always judged people by the way I find them myself and your handshake is as strong as any I've had and your word is fair and true.

Thank You !

Kingsley Munday  
Chairman  
18<sup>th</sup> May 2018