ELEVENTH NATIONAL CONGRESS OF THE

VIETNAM VETERANS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

<u>VENUE</u> Mirambeena Tourist Resort.Darwin.Northern Territory. date 26 and 27 May 1990.

PRESENT

National Executive

National President Tom McCombe
National Vice President John Haines
National Treasurer Grant Collins
National Secretary John Printz

State Delegates

Holds 2nd Proxy vote Les Fenton Oueensland John Haines Nev Varley New South Wales Holds 2nd Proxy vote Robin Harris ACT Richard Culliford John Methven Victoria 2nd proxy vote Basel Breadmore Tasmania Barry Newman Adrian Walford South Australia Jo Cox Rob Cox Western Australia STEVE POULTER Bob Roberts Northern Territory

OPEN MEETING

The National President opened the congress, welcomed all in attendence and invited the Administrator of the Northern Territory, His Honour, Mr J Muirhead. QC to officially open the eleventh National Congress of the VVAA.

His Honour, Mr J Muirhead QC delivered the keynote address and officially opened the National Congress and wished the Association well in its deliberations.

Other speakers were.....

Senator Tambling (representing The Shadow Minister of Veterans Affairs, Senator J Newman)

Mr Stephen Lalor, Deputy Commissioner for DVA (S Aust) (representing the Repatriation Commissioner, Admiral N Ralph.)

Mr Keith Lyon, Deputy Secretary, of the DVA.

Mr Ric Marshall, National Director of the VVCS.

MINUTES OF THE 10TH NATIONAL CONGRESS

Moved: WA Seconded: SA

That the minutes as circulated are a true and correct record of the 10th National Congress and that they be confirmed.

CARRIED

MINUTES of THE NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING 25/26 NOV 1989

Moved : SA Seconded : WA

That the minutes as circulated are a true and correct record of the National Council meeting and that the National Congress ratify the minutes

The Mover and seconder accepted the amendment that in item 13.1 and 13.2, in the last line that the word "died" be altered to read "Served".

CARRIED

TREASURERS REPORT

Moved :SA

Seconded : NSW

That the treasurers report as issued to the state delegates as tabled be received.

CARRIED

SECRETARY'S REPORT

The National Secretary reported on the disjointed and sometimes the administration of the association due to communication within parts of the National Executive and cited the poor of receipt and dispatch of replies associations, Government departments and interested parties.

Moved : WA

Seconded : VIC

That all Association correspondence be registered both in and out by the National Secretary and a correspondence file be actioned. CARRIED

AUSTRALIAN VEITNAM WAR VETERANS TRUST

The National Secretary tabled a Faxed report from the AVWVT

Moved: NT

Seconded: NSW

That the Report as tabled be received.

CARRIED

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Seconded : ACT

That the President's report as tabled be received.

CARRIED

ELECTION PROCEDURE REPORT

Treasurer Grant Collins, author of the discussion paper reported on problems arising from the adoption of the paper without proper discussions and from the debate the following motions were put.

Seconded: WA

That the motion accepting the discussion paper at the National Council NOT be ratified.

CARRIED

Moved : NSW

Seconded :SA

That as there are two letters re-proxy votes tabled from Tasmania, it is moved that Basel Breadmore, The current State President, Who has written directions for the election of office bearers be recognised as the delegate from Tasmania and holds that states two votes.

CARRIED

Moved : NSW

Seconded :SA

That this congress accept the proposalthat the association create a position of Research Executive with Vice President Status *concerntrate on and release information on the chemical issues on behalf of the VVAA and that this congress has the ability to elect a suitable person to that position CARRIED

SA NO 1...AUSTRALIAN FORCES ENTERTAINMENT TEAMS

Moved : SA

Seconded: NSW

That the VVAA National Congress recognises the eligibility of members of the Australian Forces Entertainment teams (as distinct from War Correspondents and News Reporters) to be members of the VVAA and calls on the RSL to likewise recognise these persons, Who were called on by the Australian Defence Forces to entertain our troops in a war zone, as a morale booster for the troops $N^{\P},$ CARRIED

SA No 3...RECOGNITION OF NEXT OF KIN

Moved : SA

Seconded : QLD

That the VVAA request the RSL to recognise the next of kin of deceased Vietnam Veterans by allowing NOK or Representitives of the deceased to march in the ANZAC Day parade.

CARRIED

SA NO 2... CHANGE OF ROYAL WARRANT FOR MEDALS

Moved : SA

Seconded: WA

That the VVAA supports the endevours of the South Australian state branch in seeking to amend the Royal Warrant for the issue of the Australian Vietnam Campaign medal so that members of all three services who saw service in South Vietnem, But who do not qualify for the Vietnam medal under the present wording of the Royal Warrant, become eligible for that medal. The major groups concerned being the HMAS Sydney and Vietnam Logistical Support Group, The CMF Observers Group and the RAAF Support group personnel.

CARRIED

SA NO 4...NAMES ON THE NATIONAL MEMORIAL

Moved : SA

Seconded: WA

That the VVAA reiterates its stand that the names of ALL those Australian servicemen and women who saw service in South Vietnam during the period 1962 to 1973 are prominently shown on the National Memorial, which is to be erected in Canberra. And that those who were killed on Active Service be specially marked with a cross.

CARRIED 10 For/6 Against

WA NO 1...LOSS OF WAR WIDOWS RIGHTS..DEFENCE SERVICE HOME LOAN

Moved : WA

Seconded : SA

That the VVAA investigates the loss of war widows rights under the Defence Service home loan scheme since being handed over to Westpac.

CARRIED 7

WA NO 2...PORTABILITY OF DSH LOANS

Moved : WA

Seconded : QLD

That the VVAA loby the Federal Government to keep its election promises made prior to the last election that the Government would make all Defence Service Home loans, Including pre Dec 87 agreements portable. CARRIED

WA NO 3...JOBLINK SCHEME

Moved : WA

Seconded : SA

That the VVAA loby the Federal Government to adopt the VV Joblink scheme in other states as it has been successfully established in WA and that it be federally funded by the Government.

CARRIED

WA NO 4...ASIAN DOCTORS IN RGHs

This motion lapsed for want of a seconder.

WA NO 5...INTERGRATION OF RGHS

This motion was withdrawn

WA NO 6...LIFEMEMBERSHIP PROCEDURE

Moved: WA

Seconded : SA

That if a National Lifemember is seen to take action to the detriment of members in any state that the national council has the power to revoke such lifemembership if decided necessary.

CARRIED

ACT NO 1...FUND RAISING INFRASTRUCTURE

Moved : ACT

Seconded : SA

The ACT branch request that the congress address the possible need to establish the necessary administrative frame work to enable a foundation or trust, to be established prior to the dedication of the National Memorial, in the ACT which would be on going and have its main charter to raise additional funds other than statute funding by the governments of the day, from any source ie Governments, companies and individuals to assist veterans, families, dependents and relations in co-operation with other charitable organisations already in place.

LOST 6 FOR/10 Against

QLD No 1...ISSUE PERSONAL TREATMENT CARD

Moved : QLD

Seconded : SA

That the federal Government be urged to amend legislation so that all Returned servicemen and women be issued with a Personal Treatment Entitlement card (Yellow Card) irrespective of which war or conflict they served in.

LOST 2 FOR/14 AGAINST

QLD No 2...SEPARATE BADGE ISSUE

Moved : OLD

Seconded : VIC

That a separate badge be issued to associate or honorary members of the VVAA in order that it be readily apparent that the member is not a veteranLOST 3 FOR/ 13 AGAINST

QLD No 3...AMEND BADGE DESIGN

Moved : OLD

Seconded : SA

That the Association badge design be amended to include the white ensign, instead of the National Flag, to denote Naval representation.

(Withdrawn as NSW indicated that future badges would have the white ensign included)

QLD No 4...MORTUARY FUND

Moved : OLD

Seconded : Lapsed no seconder

That the VVAA investigate the implementation of a mortuary fund system which is exclusively for members of the VVAA.

QLD No 5...BRIG GOWAN

Moved : QLD

Seconded : VIC

That Brig Gowan be asked to resign as the Executive Director of the AVWVT as a result of his repeated comments regarding the effects of chemicals on soldiers who served in vietnam

Amendment

Moved : SA

Seconded : VIC

That the National Secretary correspond with Brig Gowan to enquire the validity of statements attributed to him in NZ and whether those statements are his beliefs.

CARRIED

The amendment became the motion and was CARRIED

QLD No 6...TASMANIA AIR FARE

Moved : OLD

Seconded : WA

That the National Executives decision to fund the Delegate from Tasmania's air fares be ratified but in the future in similar circumstances the National Executive is be empowered to offer the particular state in financial difficulties a loan to cover air fares to be repaid at a time comfortable to that state.

CARRIED

VIC NO 1... RECOGNITION CIVILIAN CREW HMAS JAPARIT Secondel: WA.

That the National Congress discuss the case history put forward at the Congress and support the motion that the civilian members who stayed on board as the owners reps and supported our land forces be accredited, retrospectively, with the RAN so as to be eligible for any benefits and also to be eligible to membership of the VVAA.

CARRIED

VIC No 2...CIVILIAN CHEMICAL EXPOSURE

Moved : VIC

Seconded : OLD

That the VVAA co-operate with credible civilian organisations that are actively fighting the use of chemicals that enter the food chain on the grounds that those chemicals are the same as used in Vietnam with the intention of gaining the support of thinking members of those organisations in support of our aims.

CARRIED

VIC No 3...INTERGRATION OF THE RGH

(Withdrawn as discussed previously in VVAA Policy statement)

VIC No 4...TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT

Moved : VIC

Seconded: NSW

That the VVAA requests the DVA through the Minister that when travel reimbursement is due when veterans attending the DVA and VRB that the rate of payment be the same as for COMCARE on the grounds that discrimination appears against veterans.

VIC No 5...SERVICE AND VETERAN EDUCATION ON ENTITLEMENTS

Moved : VIC

Seconded : WA

That the VVAA request the Minister for Defence to institute an education program at Recruit Level, Periodical during service and on discharge the importance of documentation of injury, illness and supportive evidence for future claims and the importance to members and their families in doing so.

CARRIED

VIC No 6...FUNDING EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION

Moved : VIC

That the VVAA pursue the AFTER THE MARCH REPORT item that funding for Emergency housing be provided.

After discussion VIC $\,$ accepted the following addition which was seconded by the NT

That the emphisis be put on the DVA to develope a program for continuing funding for emegency accommodation.

CARRIED

VIC No 7...EXECUTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

Moved : VIC

Seconded : WA

That when congress makes a resolution the executive in fact carries out that direction, That the resolution is not altered in shape or form. If the Executive has reason to believe that the direction would be detrimental to the Association the resolution can only be deferred untill raised again before Congress or council.

CARRIED

VIC NO 8... SECURITY OF MAILING LISTS Seconded : SA

That the National Congress develope policy to safeguard the security of mailing lists.

CARRIED

Moved! VIC POILTCY Seconded: TAS

That when a National Ececutive member is required to visit a state on a state matter that the travel and accommodation costs be borne by that state except where a state (ie WA, NT) are disadvantaged by distance

that costs be by agreement on a negotiated basis. CARRIED

VIC No 10...ADVOCATE TRAINING

Moved ! VIC Seconded : NT

That states shoulder responsibility for the training of Advocates in the chemical issues by Dec 31 ,1991.

CARRIED

moved : VIC

VIC No 11...MEDIA CONTACT

Seconded: SA.

That each state nominate to the National Secretary a person who will be the states media representitive and included in a media network so as to facilitate any nationally released Media information being fed through that states media system.

CARRIED

VIL, GRET MOAD.

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VIC No 12...VVAA APPOINTMENTS

Moved : VIC

Seconded: NSW

That the National Congress or Council only, have the power to appoint representitives or agents to a National Body in any official capacity.

CARRIED

GENERAL MOTIONS

No 1...REWORK VVAA POLICY STATEMENT

Moved : ACT

Seconded: NSW

That Robin Harris rework and re-issue the VVAA National Policy statement with the update of policys as carried at this congress to be presented at the next National council meeting. CARRIED

No 2...POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

Moved : VIC

Seconded : NT

X

That the VVAA actively challenge the fixed idea of PTSD as being the only physological problem that causes vietnam veterans problems CARRIED

No 3...FAX PURCHASE

Seconded : WA Moved: VIC

That the National Secretary and Treasurer get quotes for up to 3 FAX machines and purchase a FAX for Nat Pres, Nat Sec an Treasurer and further that all states look to gaining FAX facilities. CARRIED

NO 4...APPOINTMENT..NAT SOLICITOR

Moved : WA

Seconded: NSW

That B Wyborne be re-appointed the VVAA National Solicitor.

CARRIED

No 5...APPOINTMENT..NAT AUDITOR

Moved: VIC

Seconded: WA

That P Sant be re-appointed the VVAA National Auditor CARRIED

No 6...DEBRIEF POLICY

It was resolved that Nev Varley the new National Vice President would be responsible to form an editorial committee to manage the publication of DEBRIEF.

The Committee to have persons (Veteran or Non Veteran) with the

following

Person with editorial experience Person with Financial Administrative experience Person with legal, Contract knowledge Person with Data base experience(optional) A chairperson

MAILING SYSTEM

The National Treasurer will supply each State branch with a Mailing List type program, free of cost which is IBM compatible, requires a colour screen and encompasses a disc-overwrite capability. Each state is asked to consider gaining this facility as has WA, SA and VIC.

Each State is responsible to put their sub-branch lists onto the state computor base and every two to three weeks prior to publication date of DEBRIEF the state puts any additions or deletions on the program and sends the copy by disc to the publisher for mailing.

Any return mail will be listed and that state asked to update the list. Excessive returns could lead to that state being responsible for the return mail costs.

CARRIED

NO 7...TASMANIA BUSH RETREAT OPENING

National Treasurer Grant Collins reported on his trip to the opening of the Bush retreat and congratulated the Tasmania State Branch for its efforts and related how the National Excutive received information on the debit arising from that opening and how that his costs would not be paid for by the inviting organisation.

A long discussion on this matter took place.

Moved : VIC

Seconded : WA

That the National Secretary write to the Tasmanian State branch indicating the concern of this National Congress that firstly the cost of the Air Fare came from the National Treasurers personal funds(Until resolved by this Congress) and that a copy of the letter be sent to the three sub-branch presidents outlining the concerns of the discussion. The letter to be sent prior to the Tasmanian state AGM. NS. CARRIED

No 8...ELECTION NOMINATION PROCEDURE

Along discussion on the procedures for national Executive positions resolved...

- 1. That persons wishing to nominate should apply in writing and submit a written resume in support of the nomination.
- 2. Be lodged with the National Secretary not less than two months (60 Days) prior to the National Congress.
- 3. That the Nomination be approved by the members state branch executive/Committee
- 4. The National Secretary to dispatch copies of the nomination and resume to all National Executive and National council members as soon as possible after receipt.
- 5. That nominations from the floor can be accepted through State delegates in exceptional circumstances but would naturally be disadvantaged by not being under consideration by state bodies and not be included in voting instructions from those states.

CARRIED

NO 9...DUTY STATEMENTS

It was noted that the Duty Statement for the National Treasurer was completed and that the Duty Statements for National President, Vice President and Secretary are yet to be finalized.

No 10...CHILD ABNORMALITY INVESTIGATION

Moved : ACT

Seconded : WA

This National Congress approves an investigation to ascertain the possibilities of building a Birth adnormality case to be prepared for legal proceedings

CARRIED

NO 11...TRUST FUND MEETING

(After discussions re the Trust fund the following motion was moved...)

Moved : OLD Seconded : WA

That the VVAA write to the AVWVT and request a meeting of at least Regional Chairpersons to discuss inconsistancies of operation.

ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS

| NATIONAL PRESIDENT | | NATIONAL VICE | PRESIDENT |
|--------------------------|----|--|-----------|
| Tim McCombe | 8 | Rob Cox | 5 |
| John Haines | 4 | Les Fenton | 4 |
| John Printz | 4 | Nev Varley | 7 |
| Tim McCombe re-elected | | Nev Varley elected | |
| NATIONAL TREASURER | | NATIONAL SECRETARY | |
| Grant Collins | 16 | John Methven John Printz Gerry Poulsen | 16 |
| Grant Collins re-elected | | John Printz re-elected | |

CONCLUSION

President Tim in closing the Congress moved a motion of appreciation to the Northern Territory State Branch, the RAAF Darwin, and the Everyman who supported the congress extremely well. CARRIED by acclimation

THE INTEGRITY OF THE VIETNAM MEDAL

A rebuttal of the RSL submission of 3 September 1990

- In a submission dated 3 September 1990, the DSL has proposed to substantially debase the criteria in the Royal Warrant for the award of the Vietnam Medal. The RSL proposes to reduce from 30 days to 1 day the time required for official visits, inspections or other occurrences of a temporary nature. A serviceman who sailed into Vietnam waters on one occasion or a general who visited Vietnam for 24 hours would receive the same medal as the serviceman who was posted to Vietnam for twelve months.
- 2. This submission is a rebuttal of the RSL position and argues strongly in favour of retaining the Royal Warrant in its present form. It argues that the present criteria are fair and just and are based on solid precedent, it argues that the decisions by present and previous governments, not to vary the criteria for the Vietnam Medal are correct. It demonstrates that the precedents put forward by the RSL are either inappropriate or incorrect.
- The RSL submission uses numbered paragraphs and for ease of reference each paragraph is examined separately and in order.
- 3.1 The first paragraph of the RSL submission states that 5000 Australian servicemen who were "deployed into the war zone" were not awarded the Vietnam Medal. The use of the term "deployed" is incorrect and has been used for emotive reasons. The Macquarie Dictionary delines deploy as:

'to spread out (troops and inifflary units) and form an extended firest

Taking the example of HMAS Sydney, which was engaged in logistic support between Australia and the Vietnam theatre of operations, there is no way that its brief, although important, visits to Vietnam waters can be construed to be of the same dimension as battalions, squadrons or ships engaged in offensive operations under command of Commander Australian Forces Vietnam or the Commander of the US. 7th Fleet, HMAS Sydney and other logistic ships, remained under the command of the Flag Officer Commanding Australian Fleet in Sydney throughout each transit to, off and returning from Vietnam.

The Boyat Warrant for the Vietnam Medal was published in the Commonwealth Gazette, No. 60, 4 July 1968 and lists four criteria for the award the Vintnam Medal. Paragraph 7(iv) states:

Service of 30 days, continuous or aggregated, for official visits, inspections or occurrence of a temporary nature or duty in Vinteam, or in ships or craft organized in operations off the Vinteamess coast.

Howhere, excepting for the Army small ships personnel which will be dealt with separately, does the RSL submission suggest that the service of HMAS Sydney and other groups they mention is anything other than the service specified in paragraph 7(iv). Nowhere does the RSL argue why the 30 days qualification should be waived. There are ample precedents for the 30 days provision including both the Africa Star and the South Atlantic Medal. The fact that these two medals are

- 3.3 The RSL correctly states that a number of groups have previously approached the Government on this issue but have been unsuccessful. The reasons for the rejections have included:
- 3.3.a. lack of precedents still true and outlined in more detail below
- 3.3.b. difficulties in now amending the Royal Warrant probably still true particularly since the Vietnam Medal was awarded to both Australians and New Zealanders.
- 3 3.c. no apparent evidence of widespread support within the ex-service community not only true but if the Vietnam Medal was debased it would outrage and offend many Vietnam veterans.
- 3.3.d. the fear that the award of the medal to the category of servicemen the RSL proposes would detract from the value of the medal for those currently entitled to it very true.
- The RSL, in a very moral argument, states that the main reason for enabling the medal to be awarded to the servicemen its proposes is that it would remove a thorn from the side of the government. The RSL states that these men are an aggrieved section of the community who believe that they are victims of discrimination. There have been many definitions of discrimination in the last few years but having been in Vietnam waters for less than 30 days is a unique definition.

It should be noted that all the groups mentioned in the RSL submission are regular servicemen who volunteered for the defence forces. More sympathy should be given to the 40,000 National Servicemen who did not leave Australia but spent two years in the Army than to regular servicemen or reservists who were disappointed that they served less than 30 days in Vietnam waters or on land in Vietnam.

Several points need to be made about the coalition policy, dated 15 August 1988 which states:

The Elberal and Mattoral parties are very minuful of the great contribution made by personnel yibo served on MAAS Sydney and other logistical support vessels during the Vietnam Conflict and to this end, the Vietnam compaign medal will be granted to these Veterans

Firstly, there is no such medal as a "Vietnam campaign medal". Even if the policy means the Vietnam Medal, it does not outline the amended criteria. Secondly, there is a motion to amend the coalition policy on the agenda of the 41st Federal Council of the Liberal Party in Brisbane on 23-25 October 1990.

- 3.5 The RSI, offers four reasons for the previous rejection, reasons which are still valid.
- 3.6 The RSL considers that there is precedent and has cited four examples. The first two examples are inappropriate and the third and four examples are totally incorrect.
- 3.6.a.(i) Clearance Diving Team No.1 Members of CDT1 received the Vietnam Medal under paragraph 7(i) of the Royal Warrant. They saw service of one day or more on the posted strength of a unit or formation in Vietnam. The unit was allotted to Vietnam for a short time which was unusual and exceptional but served in Vietnam on operations and its members were neither visitors nor observers.
- 3.6.a.(ii) Philanthropic organisations Philanthropic organisations are specifically covered under paragraph 5 of the Royal Warrant as follows:

equivalent to those onshore particularly the front line troops who suffered 500 dead and 2500 wounded. The Royal Warrant for the Vietnam Medal following well established precedents from the 1939-45 War and subsequent conflicts did not ignore the important service of personnel engaged in logistic support but put in a time qualification of 30 days. While it is unfortunate that someone may have missed out by having 29 days service, the RSI, has submitted that someone who was in Vietnam waters would obtain the Vietnam Medal for a brief visit of five hours.

3.6.b General Service Medal 1962 - The RSL considers that the amendment of the Royal Warrant covering the issue of the General Service Medal (GSM) 1962 to allow for a clasp "South Vietnam" provides a precedent directly applicable to Australian service personnel. The concept of amending Royal Warrants is really not in dispute although the example given by the RSL is inappropriate.

The issue of the GSM 1962 with clasp "South Vietnam" was made in the same gazette which announced the award of the Vietnam Medal. General Service Medals are awarded for campaigns that do not warrant a specific medal. The creation of the South Vietnam clasp was not an amendment in the sense that conditions for the award of the General Service Medal 1962 were changed but purely the formal method of recognising a new campaign, something provided for in the original warrant.

What is strange with the GSM 1962 being quoted in the RSL submission is that the GSM 1962 is a medal which requires 30 days qualification for all personnel, it is further argument that the 30 days requirement in the Vietnam Medal for logistic personnel is not unreasonable. It also raises the question that if the Vietnam Medal is debased whether there will be similar calls to debase the GSM 1962. Many servicement who were posted to Borneo and the Malayan Peninsula dirl not accumulate the 30 days required for those clasps to the GSM 1962.

- The RSL states that it has been advised that the Royal Warrant can be amended by direction of Executive Council and signed by the Governor General under the great Seal. Even if this is so, there is no mention in the entire submission of consultation with New Zealand. The Vietnam Medal was not a purely Australian medal it was also awarded to New Zealanders who served in Vietnam and it would be presumptuous to debase the Royal Warrant without consulting New Zealand.
- 3.7.i The RSL then proposes that paragraph 7(i) be diluted by reducing the requirement for service in ships or craft employed in operations on inland waters or off the coast of Vietnam from 28 days to 1 day. The 28 days requirement micrors a similar requirement in the Korea Medal and compares with the 30 days requirement in various clasps to the General Service Medals. Since the RAM destroyers on the gun line and Army small ships were posted to Vietnam for periods in excess of 28 days and in many cases for six months or more there would be few if any personnel posted to these ships who did not meet the 28 days time qualification for the Vietnam Medal. Paragraph 7(i) is not being debased because it is unreasonable but because it emphasises that paragraph 7(iv) is really quite generous.

3.7

Strangely, the amendment proposed by the RSL does not seem to achieve what it sets out to do. The amended paragraph still requires service in ships or craft employed in operations on inland waters or off the coast of Vietnam. This would seem to still exclude HMAS Sydney and other ships involved in logistic support

levelled at those whose time in Vietnam was limited or who qualified under the 28 or 30 days provisions. All who have presently qualified have done so under criteria firmly based on the solid precedents from the 1939-45 War. Korea and the General Service Medals. However, what the RSL is proposing is a 1-day provision which has no precedent and which belittles and debases criteria that have been in place for 22 years.

The RSt, states that it reaffirmed its position on the issue on 8 June 1990.

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3.11 The RSL seeks support of the Government on humanitarian and political grounds. The RSL does not spell out the humanitarian grounds but did touch on the political grounds in paragraph 4 of its submission to the effect, that the only way you are going to placate the HMAS Sydney and the Logistical Support Association was by granting their demand.

Assuming that the figure of 5000 servicemen suggested by the RSL is correct, the number of members of the HMAS Sydney and the Logistical Support Association would be much smaller and would probably be counted in the hundreds. However, 50,000 Vietnam veterans or their next-of kin will be affected if the Vietnam Medal is debased and other groups who are seeking other medals will be given a boost if the devernment weakens on this issue.

The men from HMAS Sydney and the Logistical Support Association have not be treated untainly. Include other groups, particularly Detence Scientific personnel, have better claims to have the Royal Warrant for the Vietnam Medal amended. Many regular servicemen during the years 1964 to 1973 would have been willing to serve in Vietnam but were not called to do so. Those who stayed in Australia and who did not enter Vietnam waters would quite rightly feel aggrieved if the Vietnam Medal was so debased that one five hour visit was all the qualification required for the Vietnam Medal.

Several years ago a proposal for an Australian Service Medal 1964-73 microring the conditions of the Australia Service Medal 1939-45 was raised. The advantage of that proposal was that everyone who served 18 months or more from 1964 to 1973, whether regular or National Servicemen, would receive a medal. Thus the only real argument in favour of the men of HMAS Sydney and the Logistical Support Association, that they served in warting but received no medal in recognition, would be achieved without debasing the Vietnam Medal. The major advantage would be that other regulars, particularly women, and National Servicemen who were not given the opportunity to serve in Vietnam would finally receive recognition.

The RST subminision should be rejected because them is no precedent for their proposal, the 30 days limit is reasonable and that they have exaggerated the level of ex-service support. There are numerous precedents for the provision of a time requirement of 30 days for individuals or vessels that visited but were not posted to an operational area. Five of the campaigns stars for the 1939-45 war had such a provision. The General Service Medal 1962 including clasp South Vietnam has a minimum of 30 days service for all units. Other medals such as the 1939-45 Star and the Atlantic Star have six months requirements. The 30 day requirement is not unreasonable considering the nature of the duty performed by HMAS Sydney and others involved in logistical support.