













**No 3...FAX PURCHASE**

Moved : VIC                      Seconded : WA

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

*NVP.*

**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 computer 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 Executive 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.

**CARRIED**

*NS.*

*done*





# THE INTEGRITY OF THE VIETNAM MEDAL

## A rebuttal of the RSL submission of 3 September 1990

1. In a submission dated 3 September 1990, the RSL 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.
3. 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* defines deploy as:

to spread out (troops and military units) and form an extended front

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

Service of 30 days, continuous or aggregated, for official visits, inspections or occurrence of a temporary nature on duty in Vietnam, or in ships or craft engaged in operations off the Vietnamese coast

Nowhere, 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.

3.4 The RSL, in a very moral argument, states that the main reason for enabling the medal to be awarded to the servicemen it 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 Liberal and National parties are very mindful of the great contribution made by personnel who served on HMAS Sydney and other logistical support vessels during the Vietnam Conflict and to this end, the Vietnam campaign 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 RSL 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 RSL 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 servicemen who were posted to Borneo and the Malayan Peninsula did not accumulate the 30 days required for those clasps to the GSM 1962.

3.7 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 mirrors a similar requirement in the Korea Medal and compares with the 30 days requirement in various clasps to the General Service Medals. Since the RAN 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.

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.

3.10 The RSL states that it reaffirmed its position on the issue on 8 June 1990.

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 government weakens on this issue.

The men from HMAS Sydney and the Logistical Support Association have not be treated unfairly. Indeed other groups, particularly Defence 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 live hour visit was all the qualification required for the Vietnam Medal.

4. Several years ago a proposal for an Australian Service Medal 1964-73 mirroring 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 wartime 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.

5. The RSL submission should be rejected because there 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.

October 1990