

## Geelong Vietnam Veterans Avenue of Honour and Memorial Pathway Projects



The Geelong Vietnam Veterans Avenue of Honour was created in 1995, and is situated along a short section of Melbourne Road (Princes Highway), North Geelong, between the North Geelong Railway Station and Mackey Street.

After the opening of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Canberra in 1992, discussion took place with the City of Greater Geelong and the Sub-branch to plant an Avenue of Honour and to erect an historic marker to signify the Avenue. Concurrently with the planting of an Avenue of Plane trees, an engraved Black African Granite fascia was attached to the north facing side of an existing brick wall at the site along with two commemorative plaques. Previously, the wall had housed a sign with directions to the former Shire of Corio Offices at Osborne House.



The Avenue was officially opened by the Minister for Veterans Affairs, The Honourable Con Sciacca MP, and the Mayor of the City of Greater Geelong, Cr. Gerry Smith, on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1995.

In 1997 a further sub-committee was formed with a view of completing the Memorial. It was not until 1999 that works were carried out to install floodlighting and concrete surrounds at the Memorial site and to complete installation of Black African Granite to all remaining sides of the Memorial. Flagpoles were also installed, with all works completed just prior to the August 1999 Vietnam Veterans Day Service. The project was primarily funded by the City of Greater Geelong, DVA "Their Service – Our Heritage" funding, donations from ESO's and donations from companies and private individuals.

Leading up to 1999, the Avenue of Plane trees had begun to deteriorate, due to drought conditions and associated causes and at that time the City of Greater Geelong had embarked on an ambitious capital works program named the Boulevards Project. After considerable delicate negotiation it was agreed that the Plane trees could be replaced with Ironbark species as a part of the Boulevards Project. Work had begun on this in 1999 when work on the Memorial was completed, but it was not until 7th March 2000, when a formal ceremony took place, where GDVVAA President Peter Sullivan and Mayor of the City of Greater Geelong, Cr. Ken Jarvis planted a tree to commemorate the beginning of the new Avenue of Honour.



In 2003, slate coloured Ceramic tiles were added to the base brick work of the Memorial and in the period following, it was clearly recognised by GDVVAA that yet to be determined additional works would be required to complete the overall concept of an Avenue of Honour and Memorial Park Precinct. However, a period of little action was to follow, apart from general maintenance to the Memorial area and upgrading of street signage.

Over the years that followed, the Avenue gradually deteriorated due to drought conditions, local capital works programs and general neglect. Plane trees originally planted in the Avenue were found to be dying and were replaced with Ironbark species. It was period of time where little seemed to be achieved in furthering the Avenue of Honour project.



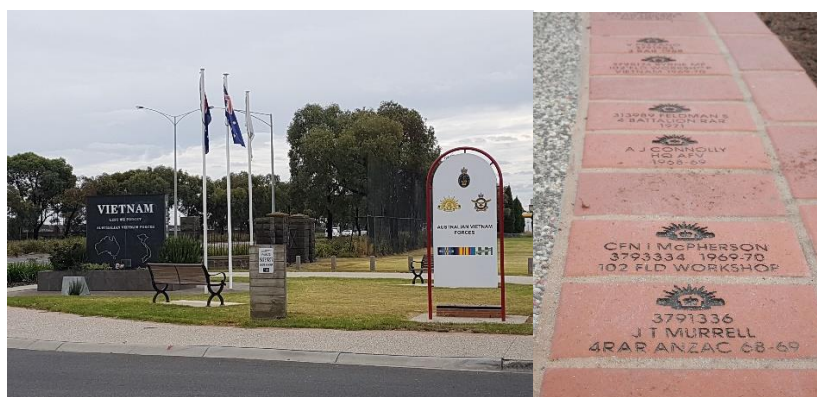
In 2013, the Geelong Vietnam Veterans sub-branch decided to seek support in an effort to restore and revitalise the Avenue of Honour in order that we may leave a legacy to all of the people of Geelong and District, and as a tribute to all those who served in Vietnam.

The First Stage of the restoration began with the replacement of the dead/dying trees in this section of the Avenue, and new signage clearly identifying this section of roadway as a sacred place needing to be protected, and the location of the nearby Vietnam Veterans Museum. Funding for this first stage of the restoration came from the Victorian Veterans Council and from our own resources. Total cost of this stage was \$7500, and was completed in December 2015.



Stage Two saw the creation of a small Memorial Park, on the north-east corner of the Melbourne Road and Swinburne Street intersection, surrounding the Black African Granite Vietnam Memorial. Works commenced in April, 2016 and were completed in time for the official opening on May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016. Incorporated into this area was a curved pathway edged with paving bricks, approximately 270 of which displayed the details of Vietnam Veterans and their Units, and Associations

and sponsors. A double-sided Roll of Honour board displaying the names of the 521 personnel who gave their lives during the course of the conflict was also erected. This stage was completed in May, 2016, at an approximate cost of \$60,000, with funding from the Department of Veteran Affairs (\$7000), State Veteran Affairs (\$18,500), and the balance from the G.&D.V.V.A.A. and sponsors.



Prior to Vietnam Veterans Day, August 2016, the City of Greater Geelong constructed a bicycle/walking path along the western side of the Vietnam Avenue of Honour. This coincided with the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan. Additional works consisted of numerous plaques commemorating battles and operations during the conflict were inlaid on the pathway, as well as the erection along the western boundary of the Avenue of 6 large



In 2016, the City of Greater Geelong submitted a proposed planning amendment which introduced a heritage overlay over the Vietnam Avenue of Honour and the Memorial, and after a lengthy planning process, this was gazetted by the Government of Victoria on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017.

Stage Three of the project consisted of the installation of 9 Interpretive Panels which compliment, and provide a story line for, the large perforated panels erected along the western boundary of the Avenue. Seven of the interpretive panels are erected adjacent to the Memorial walkway, with two on the western boundary of the Avenue, and can be viewed by visitors and residents as they visit this unique precinct.

“QR” insert have been installed on each panel so that when used with your smart device, a link is available with the Australian War Memorial, Canberra.

This display in both word and picture is a remarkable final step in the development of an extremely important and special project. Significantly, it is an informative but reverent precinct which allows visitors to learn, as well as pay respect to those who served in this conflict.



**To really appreciate the significance and all that has been achieved in developing the Avenue of Honour and Memorial Park Precinct, make a point of visiting this special place. It is unique to Geelong and of lasting historical importance.**

#### PHOTO GALLERY







Acknowledgements:

Funding - \$28,363.

Federal Department of Veteran Affairs - \$20,000.

Geelong Connected Communities (Initiative of Bendigo Bank) - \$5,000.

Geelong and District Sub-branch Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia – Balance of funding.

Contractors:

Chris Kopec (Geelong Splashbacks) glass design, production and installation.

Greg Reid (Reid Engineering) stainless steel fabrication.

Jared Wolter (John Cleese Concreting).

Richard Strzalika Photo Tiles.

City of Greater Geelong:

Grant Hawkins – Stage 3 project manager.

Steve Singline – Public Art Officer.

Kevin Krastine – Heritage Support.

Geelong & District Sub-branch VVAA Committee Avenue of Honour Sub-Committee:

Chairperson Ken Baker.

President Rieny Nieuwenhof.

Vice-President Bernard Clancy.

Jocelyn McMillan.

Colin Walters.

Graeme Unmack.

Nigel Wilson.

Frank Cunningham.

Les Fuller.