



**VIETNAM
VETERANS
ASSOCIATION
OF
AUSTRALIA -
GEELONG &
DISTRICT SUB
BRANCH**

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“THE SLOUCH HAT”
– NEWSLETTER
SEPTEMBER 2026

Welcome to the September 2026, post Vietnam Veterans Day, issue of the Geelong and District Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia Newsletter – *“The Slouch Hat.”*



Your “Vietnam Veterans Centre” is located at

31 Mt. Pleasant Road, Belmont.
Telephone: **03 5243 3700.**

THE VIETNAM VETERANS CENTRE

The centre is open every Monday, Wednesday and Friday (except public holidays) from 10am to 3 pm, call in and have a coffee, a social chat, or to just get the latest gossip. We can also advise you on who to contact if you require assistance.

VIETNAM VETERANS DAY 2026

A large crowd, comprising veterans, local Councillors, local members of Parliament, Presidents of RSLs, ESOs, family and friends, gathered at the Vietnam Memorial, North Geelong, to commemorate the 60th Anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan and to remember the 523 young Australian soldiers who paid the ultimate sacrifice during the Vietnam war. We also remembered the 60,000 young Australians who served and returned home to an unsympathetic nation.



Long Tan cross in Vietnam



Step Off of faithful Vietnam veterans



Guest Speaker Cr. Rowan Story AM RFD



Catafalque Cadets mount the guard



Cadet guard on duty



North Geelong Vietnam memorial with new plaques



Roll of Honour



The many spectators watch the ceremony on a sunny day

Vietnam Veterans Day lunch

Many veterans and friends gathered at the Shell Club for the annual Vietnam Veterans' Day lunch. It was a great opportunity to share experiences and meet up with friends who had not been seen for 12 months.



A feature of the lunch was the 'raffle' ably conducted by Franki Cunningham and Graham and Neil.





Membership Update

I would like to include my thanks to the veterans, partners and friends of the Geelong & District Sub Branch for their support in 2026. Since 1st January the Sub Branch has welcomed five new members, but regrettably two veterans have passed, Russell Mackay and Ray Watt.

Current Membership:

Total	240
Financial	227
Ordinary	152 (Veterans)
Financial Ordinary	144

David Weeks – Membership Coordinator

Allied Health Cap

The Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) reported that expenditure on allied health had increased by 14% year on year. The increase is attributed to the dramatic growth in White Card holders since 2018 when the Government declared that anyone with ONE year of service could apply for a White Card.

July 2018 68,450 White Cards issued

December 2025 194,955 White Card holders

Increase 126,505 White cards over seven years.

Critics claim that this expansion was neither adequately funded nor properly costed by DVA placing significant pressure on allied health expenditure and the broader DVA Budget.

While White Card numbers have risen sharply Gold Card numbers have declined:

July 2018 128,517 Gold Cards

December 2025 105,754 Gold Cards

Decrease approx.. 23,000

Within the 2018 Gold Card holders there approx.. 30,000 TPI veterans. These veterans are now the most affected by the proposed annual allied health cap of \$5,000.

Critics of the proposed changes argue that the cap unfairly targets some of the most vulnerable members of the veteran community.

Under the proposal veterans requiring health service beyond \$5,000 annual limit would need to seek approval for additional treatment through their general practitioner (GP) and DVA processes.

The proposal is being challenged by veteran groups, RSLs and the Opposition politicians.

The National Vietnam Veterans Museum

As friends of the Vietnam Veterans Museum on Phillip Island the Sub Branch has been allocated a number of **FREE passes**.

The free passes are held at the Geelong Vietnam Veterans Centre and members can drop in to get a FREE pass.

Presidents Report

Vietnam Veterans Day 2026

The GDVVA Veterans Day ceremony was great and went very well, thanks to Rieny for the coordination and wading through the copious documents required to put the event on. Also thanks to Gary, Mick, and Frank who assisted in making the ceremony a success. We also need to thank the Geelong RSL for supplying the marques and chairs and their team for setting them up. The ceremony was attended by well over 200 and we had 27 wreaths that were laid in commemoration.

After the ceremony the focus moved to a GDVVA subsidised 2 course lunch at the Shell club for an enjoyable gathering, well done once again to Neil and Linda. It has been very pleasing to have received more than a dozen comments since the ceremony stating how good it was, how well it went, the great attendance and that we even organised for the splendid weather!



Website

The website is now up to date with buttons and information workable. There is a new membership enquiry form that once filled and submitted will be forward to my email address so we can action. The latest copy of "The Slouch Hat" is linked to the website for anyone to access by clicking the word 'HERE'. If there is new content and information available it will be added to the pages of the website.

Library Update

The inventorying of the books continues. Once they have been catalogued members will be notified of their existence with a list placed on the website for viewing.

That's all for this month.
David Sikorski

DVA Changes for the Allied Health

The Australian Government will introduce a **\$5,000 annual threshold** on allied health expenditure for Veteran Card holders starting **1 July 2027**, as announced in the 2026–27 Federal Budget.

Why changes to the DVA Allied Health Care

The changes respond to:

- the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide
- feedback that current fees limit veterans' access to allied health services
- concerns that administration and treatment cycle restrictions impact negatively on veterans and providers
- evidence that a small number of providers are taking advantage of veterans

My Understanding of the Updates to the DVA Allied Health Care

Starting **1 July 2027**, the Australian Government is intending to make it easier and more flexible for you to access [allied health services](#)!

How the changes benefit you:

- The restrictive 12-session treatment cycle is being removed, giving you and your provider full control over your care timeline.
- You will receive a \$5,000 annual threshold dedicated entirely to general allied health services like physiotherapy, psychology, chiropractic, podiatry, osteopathy, and occupational therapy.
- Higher fees will be paid to health professionals, encouraging more top-tier clinics to accept Veteran Cards.
- Your dental, optical, hearing, medical, and specialist services, and Open

Arms counselling services remain completely unaffected and uncapped.

- If your health requires care beyond the \$5,000 threshold, DVA will continue to fully fund your treatment based on clinical need.

Please note: While the system is being designed to be as smooth and simple as possible, the specific process for tracking your \$5,000 budget is currently being finalised and has yet to be established. DVA is to provide clear tracking updates well before the launch date.

- The exact mechanism and application process for securing approval past the threshold are undergoing community and stakeholder consultation.
- Organizations like RSL Australia have raised concerns and petitioned against the limit, citing potential barriers for veterans with chronic and complex care requirements.
- I have seen a response from the TPI association raising concerns as well.

If you are interested in providing input to the DVA consultations with veterans and others you can do so by accessing the site below:

[Register your interest - Consultation on Changes to Allied Health Arrangements for Veteran Card Holders - DVA - Department of Veterans' Affairs](#) David Sikorski

Members Welfare

The ongoing wellbeing of our members is something that the committee of the Sub Branch are very conscious of. With information and changes that continue to come from DVA and other sources there is an increasing need for us to ensure that members are kept up to date with such things. We can continue to send this out via email/mail however we will also be looking at a personal approach over the coming months where we will contact members individually just to see how they are going and if we can assist in any way