

# Sit Rep

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*Sit Rep is the official  
Newsletter of the  
Friends of the National  
Vietnam Veterans  
Museum*

**Edition 40**



**Patron of the Museum:**

**General The Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK. AC(Mil) CVO MC**



**Generals Managers Report**

**Double-barrelled ending**

**Private Richard Leslie Norden VC**

**Veteran Art Festival**

**New Donation<sup>P</sup>**

**Around the museum**

# General Manager's Report to the Board

## Report November 2024



### NNVM BOARD REPORT

November 2024

#### Welcome

Well for those who are not aware, the TV show The Block finished this month and it does appear that the show's reach has attracted more visitors to the Island so over the summer months I think we should see a small percentage of day trippers visiting the Island.

We have two grants still in play. We applied for \$5 million through the Regional Tourism Investment Fund (State Government). The other grant is via Round 2 of the Growing Regional Program (Federal Government) for \$10 million which is still pending assessment. Results for this grant should come out late 2024 or January 2025.

Andy Huu Nguyen OAM, President of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam Rangers Association of Victoria has volunteered to push at a federal level how important the new Museum is, and that funding should come our way. This is a good. The more people having conversations at a government level, the greater is the chance of Federal support.

On 1st March 2025 we will be hosting an event for the Australian Vietnamese Women's Association. This ties in with the 50<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of the first Vietnamese boat people landing on our shores. We have had several meetings with the group and already we have seen an increase of awareness within the Vietnamese community in relation to their visitor numbers to our site. We need to grow this relationship as they have very good

connections with both levels of government, and with a turnover of \$44.5 million last year and a surplus of \$3.8 million, they are a valuable partner.

#### **Private Richard Norden awarded the Victoria Cross for bravery during the Vietnam War**

A young Australian soldier who ran into enemy fire during the Vietnam War to reach a wounded comrade and retrieve the body of another has been posthumously awarded a Victoria Cross for bravery.

Private Richard Leslie Norden received the award for "most conspicuous acts of gallantry" during the war.

Following a Remembrance Day service at the Australian War Memorial, Governor-General Sam Mostyn and Prime Minister Anthony Albanese announced the nation's highest military honour for Private Norden, who died after the war in a motorcycle accident.

During the 1968 Battle of Fire Support Base Coral, the 19-year-old soldier showed extraordinary bravery by running towards North Vietnamese enemy fire to retrieve his section commander who had been shot.

After managing to drag his commander successfully back to safety, the already wounded Private Norden again placed himself in grave danger trying to save another member of his platoon who had been shot.

# General Manager's Report to the Board Report November 2024



The Victoria Cross is the highest honour for bravery in war. (AAP: Lukas Coch)

"On discovering his comrade had been killed, he fought on, clearing the area so his body could be safely recovered," the Prime Minister said. "Such was his courage, that the enemy soldiers abandoned their positions and, as a result, many more Australian lives were saved. These deeds are more than worthy of the highest military honour our nation can bestow, the Victoria Cross for Australia".

# April 2024 Board Report cont'd

## Visitation

Visitation numbers for October have lifted and I am hoping that we will remain above average until the end of the year.

The Block show has increased awareness of the Island with the Penguin Parade attributing a 14% increase directly to the reality show.

## Finances:

Years	JAN	FEB	MAR	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	Total
2019	1794	1599	1937	1817	1499	1168	1056	977	1403	1607	1401	1138	17396
2020	2771	1509	1580	0	0	796	579	37	0	0	725	1691	9688
2021	3127	1116	2035	2563	1261	727	1244	156	356	341	1053	1643	15622
2022	2974	1537	1702	2723	1500	1490	1526	1240	2389	1749	1547	2065	22442
2023	3253	1702	2160	2812	1426	1406	1700	1374	2335	1718	1722	1996	23604
2024	3112	1350	2065	2205	1034	1758	1260	1250	1756	1831			17621
2025													0

## YTD Financials

Entry fees have been realigned to budget for public visitors, particularly mid-week, but group bookings are \$6K below target. Cost of living pressures have impacted merchandise sales which are also \$9K lower than expected. Telco rental fees are higher than budget due to a timing issue. Donation income is significantly higher than budget due to a donation contribution towards the planning permit for the museum.

We have also received unbudgeted income from other donors as well as the container deposit scheme.

YTD expenditure totaling \$372K is \$58K higher than budget due to costs associated with the planning permit and new museum build, which has been funded by donation income.

# April 2024 Board Report cont'd

The summary of our financial position as of October 2024 is below.

National Vietnam Veterans Museum Ltd

25 Veterans Drive, Newhaven 3925

## Profit & Loss—Actual v Budget

January 2024 to October 2024

	Selected Period	Budgeted	\$ Difference	% Difference
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$491,810</b>	<b>\$366,296</b>	<b>\$125,514</b>	<b>34.3%</b>
<b>Total Cost of Sales</b>	<b>\$33,164</b>	<b>\$31,171</b>	<b>\$1,993</b>	<b>6.4%</b>
<b>Gross Profit</b>	<b>\$458,646</b>	<b>\$335,125</b>	<b>\$123,521</b>	<b>36.9%</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$373,353</b>	<b>\$313,138</b>	<b>\$58,215</b>	<b>18.5%</b>
<b>Operating Profit/(Loss)</b>	<b>\$86,292</b>	<b>\$20,986</b>	<b>\$65,306</b>	<b>311.2%</b>
Total Other Income	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	NA
Total Other Expenses	\$1,386	\$0.00	\$1,386	NA
<b>Net Profit/(Loss)</b>	<b>\$84,906</b>	<b>\$20,986</b>	<b>\$63,919</b>	<b>304.6%</b>

### Bank Accounts—Balance as of 31 October 2024

NVVM Ltd Trading Acc 8577	\$115,334.61
NVVM Build Patriotic B3352	\$29,770.08
NVVM Ltd Don & Grants Acc 1212	\$50,651.17
NVVM New Museum Building Project	\$148.97
Foundation Bank Acct—6799	\$15,028.36
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$210,933.19</b>

# April 2024 Board Report cont'd

## Restoration

Things are moving slowly, however, the team are working on a number of projects, they will get there in the end. After Christmas I am going to reach out to a couple of retired ex tradesmen and see if I can get one of them to come in and assist with the organisation of the team as Paul Reynolds (our last supervisor has started his own repair shop in Cowes).



## Collections

Updated exhibits continue and unfortunately Max and Don have been off with various injuries, however, with a little help from General Manager a new exhibit was finished.

The Vietnamese display areas upstairs are being refreshed in preparation for the arrival of guests on March 1st..

## Museum and surrounds

Our IT roll-out is now complete. Staff have new computers and the site has a new server. Stage two, which will occur late in 2025 is to upgrade computers in the library and cataloguing areas.

Chris has finished up in the Café, and we thank her for her contribution and wish her well. We have new operators and have done some work to the kitchen.



**Braxton Laine**

# Private Richard Leslie Norden

Service No: 2412437

**Private Richard Leslie Norden, Service No: 2412437**

**Royal Australian Infantry Australian Reinforcement Unit 05 Dec 1967–30 Jan 1968**

**7th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment 31 Jan 1968–09 Apr 1968**

**1st Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment 10 Apr 1968–13 Aug 1968**

On 11 November 2024, Private R L Norden, from Gundagai, NSW, was posthumously awarded a Victoria Cross for: *most conspicuous acts of gallantry in action in the presence*

*of the enemy in the 'AO Surfers' Area of Operations in the Bien Hoa province, Vietnam, on 14 May 1968 during the Battle of Fire Support Base Coral.*



Pte Norden (middle) on the day his DCM was presented by Sir Roden Cutler. Photo by George Lipman, SMH.

Private Norden, who was only 19 years old at the time, was initially awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM). But many of those who served with him believed he deserved a higher honour. Indeed, when presenting Private Norden with his DCM, Sir Roden Cutler, himself a recipient of the Victoria Cross

and Governor of New South Wales at the time, is reported to have remarked to Norden, 'I don't know what one has to do these days to win a Victoria Cross'.

# Private Richard Leslie Norden

Service No 2412437

In his Application to Defence (September 2020) to have Private Norden's award upgraded to a VC, Lieutenant Colonel Hulse provided the following description of the relevant events:

*At 5.30 pm on 14 May 5 Platoon B Company 1 RAR, was operating about one thousand metres from FSB Coral when it was ambushed by an enemy squad of six men. The forward scout and the section commander of the leading section were hit, twenty metres in front of the remainder of the section. Heavy fire isolated the two wounded men.*

*Private Richard Norden of the leading section asked for covering fire and dashed forward under heavy enemy fire to the section commander, killing one enemy on the way.*

*Having expended his own ammunition, he grabbed his own ammunition, he grabbed the automatic weapon of the dead Viet Cong soldier and fought off other enemy as he assisted the section.*

*Although wounded, Norden again went forward under enemy fire and reached the forward scout, killing the Viet Cong who had been using the scout as a shield.*



*Seeing that the scout was dead, Norden returned to the section, collected grenades, and cleared the area, enabling the scout's body to be recovered. His three attacks into the enemy position resulted in the position being secured.*

*Norden was personally responsible for killing three of the enemy.*



# Private Richard Leslie Norden, Service No: 2412437

In 1970, Richard Norden began work in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Police Force.

He died as a result of a traffic accident while on duty in 1974.

He was 24 years old.



## ENORMOUS POTENTIAL AND POSSIBILITY

A message from General (Retd) the Honourable David Hurley AC CVO DSC, Governor-General from 2019 to 2024 (from the Courier-Mail).

We are a weird mob. We can be brilliant and yet we can be frustrating. We can reach great heights and yet be deeply disappointing. We are a multicultural island nations, bound, particularly when needs must, by common purpose and values and yet at times seemingly divided into an island of nations.

But amidst these contradictory and conflicting characteristics there lies enormous potential and possibility. The opportunity to watch and participate in the interplay of these characteristics over the last 20 years has reinforced in me the criticality of our freedoms and the quality of our people, and as such has made me proud to be an Australian.

Linda and I have visited too many disaster scenes. Each visit has, however, reinforced our appreciation for many strengths that Australians possess. Similarly, in our visits to numerous institutions and organisations that are

driving change through research and action in health, education, family welfare and so many other fields, were humbled by the passion and energy we witnessed. In military life I have seen Australians achieve amazing outcomes through their pragmatism, down-to-earth style and humanity. You cannot have these experiences and not be proud of your countrymen and women.

I often quoted from Dorothy Mackellar's My Country in my speeches as Governor-General. Not from the beginning of her poem but from its conclusion.

Mackellar reminds us that for all the tribulations our country sets upon us, "she pays us back threefold". I am convinced that it is not just the natural characteristics of our country that provided a threefold return but the quality of our people. Depend on them and they will pay you back threefold.

## Recent donations



### Bayonet from Long Tan

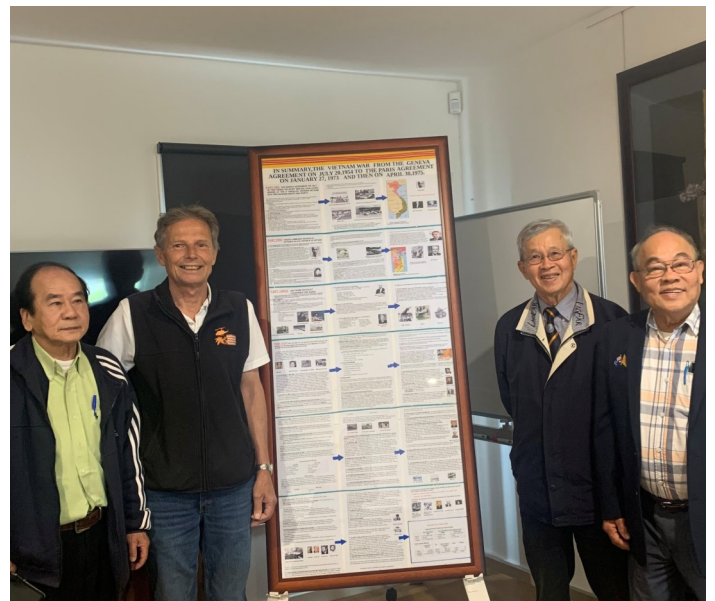
The Museum hosted members from 6RAR on 29 October 2024 when they presented to us a bayonet, scabbard in a piece of marble.

Former Commanding Officer, 2Lt Dave Sabben Medal for Gallantry, Mention in Despatches, 12 Platoon, 1) Company 6RAR 1966-1967, came into possession of the bayonet the day after the Battle of Long Tan.

The bayonet had been issued to an unidentified Australian casualty of the

battle. Dave kept the bayonet in his kit until he returned to Australia.

Approximately 20-25 years ago, Dave handed it on to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Masonic Lodge. As members of the Lodge are becoming fewer due to age, the decision was made to pass the artefact on to the National Vietnam Veterans Museum, to ensure its perpetuity.



### Donation from Footscray RSL

Late last year members from the Footscray RSL compiled, framed and presented a large, detailed time-line of the Vietnam War.

## Recent donations

VVAA Vic. Van Donation.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> November, 2024 the museum was presented with a Mercedes Benz sprinter van which had been used for the education program run by VVAA Victorian Branch Vietnam Veterans Education Team.



Pictured from left.

NVVM Board members, Phil Dressing, John Methven, Chairman of the Board Kingsley Munday, Veteran Ray Weston, who delivered the van, Board members Bob Elworthy & Gary Elliott, NVVM GM Braxton Laine.

# A double-barrelled ending

## A double-barrelled ending

*An article from the ARMY magazine 6 February 2025 by Sgt Matthew Bickerton*

### **Former Army members are reunited with a one-of-a-kind rifle they retrieved in Vietnam in 1966. Sgt Matthew Bickerton writes.**

Two Australian soldiers were killed and two wounded by sniper fire in the rice fields of Vietnam in January 1966.

During the contact, an injured but determined enemy sniper left a 200metre blood trail as he crawled to reach an underground tunnel.

Borrowing an Owen Gun from a medic, with its stock removed, then Spr Alan Christie, of 3 Field Troop, volunteered to pursue, which he did in complete darkness.

"I could hear him ahead of me and assumed he could hear me," Mr Christie said.

He pressed on, encountering vegetation contaminated with phosphorus deliberately left every few metres by the sniper to hinder his pursuit.

Moving forward another 40 or 50 metres, Mr Christie came across the sniper's rifle in a "beautiful" leather case.

"I could see he was losing a lot of blood and would soon bleed out," he said.

*After 15 minutes of pursuit and no longer hearing the sniper's retreat, Mr Christie took the rifle and turned back, mindful that venturing further might force a fellow sapper to come after him.*

"I returned to the surface, and to make sure the engineers retained the rifle, I vandalised it by

carving 3 Field Troop [3 FD TP] on the butt with my bayonet," he said.

This took place during the joint US-Australian Operation Crimp.

1RAR, along with their attached sappers, were tasked with acting as a blocking force while two other battalions in the brigade would push the enemy towards them.

The 3 Field Troop commander, Captain Sandy MacGregor, now Colonel (retd), said that's not what happened. He said 1RAR encountered the tunnels immediately.

"When the infantry couldn't find where the bullets came from, they called on the engineers," Col MacGregor said.

What they discovered became known as the Cu Chi tunnels – an underground network from which the enemy fired through concealed holes, covering an area where 1RAR had initially planned to land but changed course at the last moment.

"First, we blew tear gas into the tunnels to get the enemy out," Col MacGregor said.

They followed with smoke grenades to expose other entrances to the tunnel complex, but the effort revealed little.

Before sending more sappers down, there was an attempt to blow the smoke and tear gas out of the tunnels.

Cont'd

## A double-barrelled ending



“Our blokes went in with tear gas masks to search but started passing out. The smoke didn’t clear after blowing air down the tunnels. There was not enough oxygen,” Col MacGregor said.

When someone passed out, another person had to retrieve them.

“The tunnels were so tight, you couldn’t get someone on the other side. They had to be dragged out, and it was bloody awful,” Col MacGregor said.

Most of this searching took place on the days after Mr Christie retrieved and claimed the sniper rifle for the engineers.

However, the infantry took possession of the rifle and have since stored it in the armoury at Singleton, NSW.

The captured Russian MosinNagant sniper rifle is the only one of its kind possessed by Army.

Col MacGregor spent decades unsuccessfully petitioning for its release to the Royal Australian Engineers.

Recently, there was a compromise. To honour the history of the ‘Tunnel Rats’, the

Australian Army History Unit borrowed the rifle and commissioned a replica.

The replica was crafted at Gaza Ridge Barracks in Bandiana, where the model maker spent hours outside the armoury, meticulously casting resin and perfecting every detail.

The unveiling was held at the Australian Army Museum of Military Engineering (AAMME), Holsworthy, on December 5, 2024, attended by Col MacGregor, Mr Christie and more than 200 civilians, veterans and Army personnel, with the replica and the original rifle on display.

It had been 58 years since Col MacGregor and Mr Christie last saw the rifle.

The replica is on permanent display at the AAMME, while the original was returned to Singleton.

Cont’d

## A double-barrelled ending

Vietnam War veterans Col Sandy MacGregor (retd) and Spr Alan Christie (retd) pose with the sniper rifle from 1966, and its replica.



Spr Alan Christie (retd) replaces his medals in the Russian Mosin-Nagant sniper rifles replica display cabinets, donating them to the AAMME in Holsworthy.



AAMME manager Maj Robert Wallace, Col Sandy MacGregor (retd) and museum curator Rachel Hart at the unveiling of the replica sniper rifle at the AAMME.



# Veterans art festival

## Veterans arts festival

The Australian National Veterans Arts Museum has unveiled the program for the second annual Festival of Veterans Arts (FOVA).

Following a successful debut in 2024, FOVA will offer a wider selection of veteran and public events under this year's theme, 'Together': highlighting creativity as a unifying force for veterans, families and the community.

FOVA will run from March 21 to 30 in Melbourne's Southbank and Arts Precinct.

Veterans, families and member of the public are invited to connect with and celebrate the stories of veteran artists.

For event registration and the full program, visit [www.fova.org.au](http://www.fova.org.au)

## Phillip Island RSL AGM

# NOTICE OF AGM

ANZAC ROOM | TUESDAY 25TH MARCH | 7.00PM

Visit [pirsl.com.au/about-us](http://pirsl.com.au/about-us) for timetable

**All members welcome!**

*(Financial members only)*

*(Only Financial, Service and Affiliate members have voting rights)*



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# Around the museum

## Merchandise

Merchandise sales have been going strong, particularly throughout the holiday period. The Sluban brick models continue to sell well as do diecast models of small helicopters and tanks.

Clothing options: We currently have 4 colours of polo shirts: red, navy, black and grey with the logo embroidered on upper left.

Scarves remain very popular.

We have polar fleece jackets in black and navy and vests in red or black-some limits in sizing.

We have "bush hats" in navy and khaki, peaked caps in black with museum logo; black with Uc Dai Loi; Black with Vietnam and 4 ribbon printed; navy with NAVY in white.

The new EPOS computer system is working well. The volunteers are all familiar with the new procedures, and the system has streamlined obtaining sales information, and stock supplies.

The new EPOS system does not have the capacity to do credit transactions without a physical credit card. If you ring to purchase merchandise you will need to pay directly into our account when the order is placed.

Direct deposit: NVVM trading acct

Bendigo Bank BSB 633 000

Account No: 149 738 577





## Volunteer of the Year

Each year at the Christmas party the Volunteer of The Year is announced. This year two volunteers were awarded volunteer of the year, namely:

Russell Jackson and Jock McKenzie

Russell (pictured below) joined us on 10 January 2023. He works every Tuesday and Thursday on the front desk and is a registered guide for our Education programme. Russell also will sit with any vets that he sees is struggling when they come through our doors.



Jock McKenzie joined the museum in 2013.

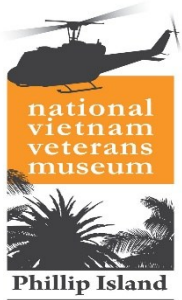
He comes in every Wednesday. The first job is to vacuum the entire inside of the museum. Yes folks the entire area. Jock has a love hate relationships with the pesky bits of gravel that get trapped in. You can hear him thumping the floor with the vacuum cleaner from time to time picking up the gravel. Once the floors are done, he then heads outside to clean up and mow the lawn. He has been known on occasion to help out on the front of house when things get busy.

Thank you both

# Become a Friend of NVVM

Office use

Membership Number.....



The Friends of NVVM program unites people committed to supporting the mission of this unique museum: to remember, interpret and understand the experience of Vietnam War veterans and the enduring impact of the war on society.

As well as demonstrating your high regard for NVVM and its work, **Friendship brings you:**

- \* **Free member admission on all visits**
- \* **2 Guest free passes per payment**
- \* **10% discount on admission cost for immediate family.**
- \* **10% discount in Museum shop & Nui Dat Café.**
- \* **Discounts to museum events.**
- \* **Regular Newsletters.**
- \* **Single vote at AGM.**

**Payment: (circle your choice)**

	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year
Individual	\$35	\$65	\$95
Concession	\$25	\$45	\$65
Family	\$70	\$130	\$190
Corporate	\$200	\$350	\$500

**Life: Aged 60yrs +**

Individual \$800    Concession \$600

**Life: Aged under 60yrs**

Individual \$1200    Concession....\$800.

## Primary Member's Details (please print)

Company Name:.....

Title..... Surname.....

First name.....

Address:

.....  
.....

State..... Post code.....

Email address.....@.....

.....

Phone.....

Signature.....

Date:...../...../.....

Immediate family in Friend's household

.....  
.....

**Concession:** applies to veteran card holders, fulltime students, seniors and pensioners.

**Family:** allows for 2 adults and up to 3 children.

**Corporate:** allows for four adults and up to 10 children.

Email: [office@vietnamvetsmuseum.org](mailto:office@vietnamvetsmuseum.org)

25 Veterans Drive Newhaven, Phillip Island VIC

Direct Deposits to NVVM trading acct

Bendigo Bank            BSB 633 000

Account no:            149 738 577

Z; Museum friends; become a friend.