



# Media Transcript

Senator the Hon Michael Ronaldson  
Minister for Veterans' Affairs  
Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC  
Special Minister of State

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MINVA046

## **Transcript - Remarks at the Vietnam Veterans Day Remembrance Service, Canberra**

It is a great honour to speak to you today on behalf of the Prime Minister who sends his apologies that he is unable to attend.

On this day 48 years ago, the men of Delta Company, 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion Royal Australian Regiment withheld an enemy attack in a rubber plantation at Long Tan in Vietnam.

Vastly outnumbered against their Viet Cong opponents, the Australians would lose 18 men in battle that day.

It was a defining battle in Australia's 10 year engagement in Vietnam.

And its anniversary has become the day when a nation now acknowledges, with grateful thanks, those men who served their nation in the Vietnam War.

Thanks, it should always be acknowledged, that was far too long in coming.

Five hundred and twenty one Australians were killed in action in Vietnam.

Three thousand were wounded in action and they returned home carrying the scars of the battle – both physical and emotional.

Those who returned home were never properly honoured for their work serving their nation at their nation's request.

The physical and mental scars left by the war are still evident for many of those who served and their families.

Long overdue, the welcome home parade for Vietnam Veterans in 1987 saw the genesis for this Memorial here in our nation's capital, a perpetual and ever-lasting reminder of the service and sacrifice of the almost 60,000 Australians who served in the Vietnam War.

I have not served.

As many of you have heard me say before, I do not pretend to understand what it is to have served.

As a Shadow Minister and now Minister, I do however now have a far better understanding of the ramifications of that service.

The veterans here today, and your families, more fully understand the impact of your service on your lives.

As we join here today to remember the Battle of Long Tan, we think as well of those who served at the battles of Coral and Balmoral, at Binh Ba, on the 'Vung Tau Ferry' and in RAAF missions in the skies above.

Today, on Vietnam Veterans Day I am very pleased to have launched a Facebook page for the Veterans' and Veterans' Families Counselling Service – the service founded by Vietnam veterans.

The VVCS Facebook page will enable the veteran community to learn more about VVCS group programs and other services.

It will also provide an avenue for community questions to be answered as an online VVCS veteran support community is established.

VVCS online tools can be accessed on mobile platforms, ensuring instant and simplified access to information and support details when it's needed.

Online tools support existing services – they do not replace them.

The VVCS online presence is part of a wider initiative by DVA and the Government to increase on-line and social media presence.

This service, founded as the Vietnam Veterans' Counselling Service, has come a long way from its humble beginnings.

Vietnam Veterans should be proud of this important legacy which lives on for the benefit of future generations.

Over the Anzac Centenary period we remember a century of service and sacrifice in all wars, conflicts and peace keeping operations, including Vietnam

In 2016, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan, I have approved 'in-principle' a small mission of veterans to return to Vietnam to participate in a commemorative event there.

In Australia, this anniversary will similarly be marked in the respectful and dignified way it should be.

Both the Government and I as Minister will ensure this important anniversary, and other significant anniversaries from the Vietnam War, are given the recognition they are due.

Many of you, as leaders of the veteran and ex-service community, are actively engaged in educating the next generation of Australian's.

Together, we have an obligation to share with our young people information about where we fought, when we fought and reflect on the values we fought to defend.

In closing, we who are here today come to honour those who made the supreme sacrifice during battle as well as the wounded, ill and injured who returned home.

We also pause to reflect on the impact of their service on their families.

We who gather here with you, the men and women that this day honours, are privileged to do so.

Lest We Forget.