



NASHO



An Official Journal
of the

NATIONAL SERVICEMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

ABN: ABN 67 616 946 831

Patron: Matt Anderson PSM, Director Australian War Memorial

President: Ron Brandy

Editor Pro Tem: Peter Norman, National Secretary

Spring 2024 Edition

THE NATIONAL PRIDE ROSE:



The National Pride Rose

This classic hybrid tea rose continuously produces an abundance of beautiful creamy blooms with white gold centres.

Each exquisite flower is petal filled and intoxicatingly fragrant carrying a deeply scented spicy rose perfume. Hardy and healthy, this rose is ideal for both garden and pot alike. Approx Height: 1.5m

The National Pride Rose was created exclusively for the National Servicemen's Association of Australia. It is available for purchase Australia-wide from rose stockists, but it may need to be ordered in for you. Google "National Pride Rose" for more information.

Every rose sold generates a donation from Corporate Roses to the NSAA, so make sure you tell them you're a Nasho when you place your order.

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

THE NATIONAL PRIDE ROSE:	1
THE MILITARY SHOP:	2
NATIONAL PRESIDENT’S BULLETIN:	3
THE FUTURE OF THE NSAA AFTER 26/12/2026:	5
“NASHO” NEWSLETTER - TARGET AUDIENCE EXPLAINED:	6
A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A NEWSLETTER EDITOR:	7
NATIONAL SERVICE UK:	10
WHICH COUNTRIES HAVE MANDATORY MILITARY SERVICE?:	12
REGIONAL SECURITY AND PACIFIC PARTNERSHIPS: RECRUITING PACIFIC ISLANDERS INTO THE AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE:	13
LAST VETERAN OF THE ‘SCRAP IRON FLOTILLA’ TAKES HIS FINAL VOYAGE:	16
LAST VETERAN OF THE ‘RATS OF TOBRUK’:	19
THE FIGHT FOR THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM CAMPAIGN MEDALS:	22
THE NATIONAL SERVICEMEN’S ASSOCIATION COMMEMORATIVE EVENT AT THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL SEPTEMBER 2024:	24
DO YOU HAVE A STORY?	29
LONGSTANDING VETERAN ORGANISATION FOLDS:	30
THE SUPERSEDED NSAA WEBSITE:	31
THE OFFICIAL NSAA WEBSITE:	32

THE MILITARY SHOP:



The Military Shop in Canberra is undoubtedly the best place to find personal military apparel, hats and berets, badges, replica medals, memorabilia and all sorts of things navy, army and air force. The Military Shop also makes a good donation to the NSAA each year based on commission of sales of Nasho gear. Keep The Military Shop in mind if you have a need for any of this stuff. You don't need to go to Canberra, because their catalogue is online. A Google search for "Military Shop" will get you started. Tell 'em you're a 1951-1959 or 1965-1972 Nasho.

NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S BULLETIN:

NSAA NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT FOR THE NSAA NATIONAL COUNCIL - SEPTEMBER 5, 2024

NSAA National Executive

My thanks to the members of the National Executive, Noel Moulder, Peter Norman, Richard Tregear, and Public Officer, John Thorn Officer for your ongoing efforts and leadership in your respective roles. Thank you for supporting me and the association through the work you do on behalf of the Council and our membership.

Honours and Awards. National and State and Territory Based Awards

It is gratifying to see NSAA members recognised, either nationally or at their community level, for the work they have and continue to do on behalf of both Nashos but their communities also.

Congratulations to Noel Blake OAM, past president NSAA Victorian Branch, Northern Districts Sub-Branch, and John Honeycombe OAM, NSAA QLD Branch, Townsville Branch member for their awards of the OAM, and NSAA National Secretary for receiving the Federal Electorate of Casey, Victoria, Community and Volunteer award, presented by the Federal Member for Casey, The Honourable Aaron Violi's MP. Well done gentlemen.

Issues facing the NSAA

NSAA Membership. While membership in some locations is holding with minimal non-renewals, some are debilitated and becoming unviable due to a range of well-known circumstances. The treasurer's report on membership will elaborate on those key numbers Australia wide.

Longevity and capabilities of the NSAA. These elements are key to the life and future of the NSAA entity and are well known.

There has been significant debate at NSAA Council, Branch, and Sub-Branch levels on this subject since the decision to work toward a dignified winding down and eventual closure of the NSAA. At a National Level, the date of 31 Dec 2026 was debated and agreed as a point at which Member Associations (MA) have implemented their plans for operation beyond that date. MA decisions will inform the future of the NSAA National body.

Sustaining a NSAA National Presence – Progress Report – For the NSAA Council Consideration

In order to fully appreciate and study the potential of our NSAA future, I offered the National Executive members papers describing my vision of what may be possible for their consideration. As indicated in proposal, we are barely two years away from what I have effectively named our 'D-Day', 31 December 2026.

My proposal was diligently dissected, debated and enhanced by feedback. At the conclusion of our meeting, not all of the feedback and considerations were fully aligned. Consequently, I have revised and updated the proposal and forwarded it to the Executive for further consideration.

In the papers you will receive prior to the 5 September 24 Council meeting, will be a component that addresses the National Executive's aligned vision of the post 31 December, NSAA National presence.

Please study these documents and share your frank and fearless views as we deliberate at our forthcoming Council meeting.

Projects

NSAA Archives – Apart from a joint effort in May last, VP Noel Moulder and I have not been able to meet and advance further culling and reconciliation of the NSAA records. However, Noel has been communication with the NLA and will update us on what he has been able to learn and achieve post the May culling in Wacol. We are attempting to meet with the NLA 4-7 September 24.

We remain grateful to the QLD Branch for their cooperation and good will in providing temporary storage for the records at their Wacol facility.

AWM Sponsored NSAA Commemorations. NSAA National Vice President Noel Moulder will update the Council on the AWM offers.

NSAA National Patron. I am exceedingly grateful to Mr Matt Anderson PSM for accepting our invitation to be our NSAA National Patron, at the pleasure of his Minister of course! We will have the privilege of Matt's attendance at our post GM dinner on 5 September 24, and the following day at which he will officiate at our annual NSAA Memorial Service.

AWM UPGRADE PROJECT-NSAA DISPLAY

At an appropriate time, and with the input of the National Executive, I will seek some guidance from Matt Anderson on how the National Executive may get involved in the proposes reestablishment of the NSAA display planned for the upgraded AWM Post WW2 area. I think it would be helpful to the AWM for us to offer some realistic suggestions e.g. a publicly accessible, digitally searchable record of our fallen.

MILSHOP and Corporate Roses Support

I am delighted to confirm that both organisations have been able to forward their respective annual donations derived from sales to the National Treasurer, being \$564.71 and \$425.00 respectively.

Issues of Concern

Nasho Fair Go (NFG) There have been some concerns raised about the less than factual statements published by NFG in the media. NSAA WA President James Duquemin has provided some documentation for discussion.

As always, I welcome your presence and participation in Council, our Commemorative, and Social activities. Travel safely.

Ron Brandy

National President
National Servicemen's Association of Australia
1 Sep 2024

THE FUTURE OF THE NSAA AFTER 26/12/2026:

At the NSAA National Council meeting conducted on 5/9/2024 in Canberra, the delegates considered three options for the future of the NSAA national organisation, for after the target end date of 31/12/2026. This date is now referred to as D-Day.

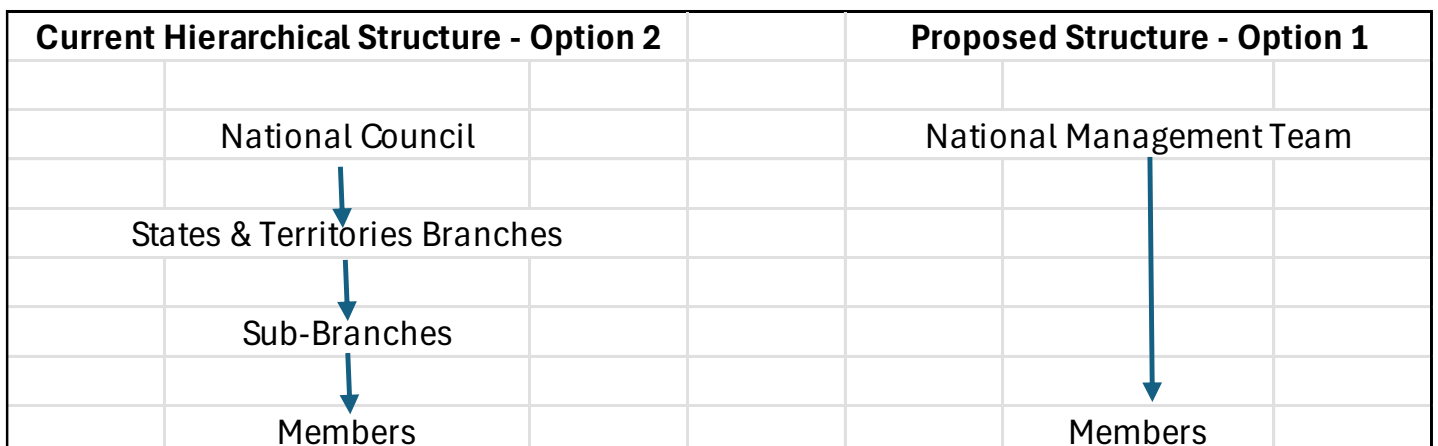
Option 1 – Reform to a nation-wide individual member organisation with a single national management team.

~~Option 2 – Retain NSAA as is currently structured and managed.~~

~~Option 3 – Disband completely – states and territories branches revert to social, or state constituted entities.~~

After due deliberation and the realisation that sub-branch committees throughout Australia are becoming increasingly difficult to resource, the National Council decided to adopt Option 1. Option 2 was rejected because it will not be possible for many branches and sub-branches to continue ad infinitum, with many already teetering on the edge of viability. Option 3 was rejected because many individual members wish to retain membership of the NSAA, whereas Option 1 caters for this cohort to continue membership.

Thus, Option 1 will be further developed by the National Executive as the way forward for the National body after D-Day. Option 1 would see the states and territories branches disconnected from the National body on D-Day, with their members being invited to become National Direct Members of a reconstituted NSAA national body, which does not have branches or sub-branches, and therefore does not require formal management committees which is currently the case.



Option 1 is already in effect for ex-N.T. and ex-N.S.W. members. Expansion of Option 1 into other states and territories Australia-wide would continue the mateship and camaraderie of their local groups, and there would be no requirement for them to have management committees to conduct the formalities of business. There will be only one management committee in Option 1 – a National Management Team looking after the interests of all members who will be known as Direct National Members.

“NASHO” NEWSLETTER - TARGET AUDIENCE EXPLAINED:


“Nasho” is the newsletter for Nashos who were previously members of NSAA states and territories branches which have closed along the way. Two have closed so far, Northern Territory and New South Wales, with possibly more to follow as age wears us all.

Many such disenfranchised members may wish to remain with the NSAA, so a special category was set up in late 2023. These members are referred to as “Unattached National Members”.

The Unattached National Members will receive a copy of “Nasho” three or four times per year. Courtesy copies are also sent to states and territories secretaries, and to the Officer Training Unit (Scheyville) Association.

If there is anything published in any edition of “Nasho” which needs clarification, a letter to the editor is appropriate.

This is the third edition of “Nasho”, the newsletter for Nashos who were previously members of NSAA states and territories which have closed along the way. Former Northern Territory members joined in 2023 and New South Wales members joined for 2024. “Nasho” will achieve the best readership if readers make comments and suggestions for subsequent editions.



Pete Norman, NSAA National Secretary, Nasho Editor Pro Tem.



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A NEWSLETTER EDITOR:

Boring, boring, boring: Like being a back-room bean counter in an army Q-Store. Nothing much to tell the wife about after work, while sitting at the kitchen table, anticipating the tantalising aromas arising from the pots before they transform into tastes. Likewise, newsletter editors generally have very little to report first hand. They rely on the writings of others, when others are mostly few. A few snippets here, some tales of old there, and a whole bunch in the middle still in thought form, not yet chrysalised into words on paper. Generally boring, boring, boring stuff: But, not for this newsletter editor today. This is a war-story about a planned Ground Hog Day of repetitive sameness, which, in the fullness of time, went remarkably awry.

It started with an early morning visit to the dentist, followed by an hour's drive to attend the funeral of a Nasho colleague. I was a few minutes late arriving. The carpark was full, but a nearby street offered an hour for those without a permit. There were many flash cars in the driveways, and the couple of real estate signs suggested \$-squillions. But my immediate task was to now walk to the funeral parlour, now about half a kilometre way. I arrived puffing, fifteen minutes into the service. Being the editor of the "Vic State" newsletter, I needed to capture a few photos of the other Nashos in attendance, and a few snippets about the "dear departed's" brief sojourn as a Nasho, 69 years prior. For "Vic State" readers, his name was Geoff Taylor. I first met him in 2014 when he was the Membership Officer for Bayside Sub-Branch, and I was the State Membership Officer for Victoria. So, with a few photos now safely ensconced in my iPhone, I then left the mourners to their mingling and reminiscing, and departed to undertake some private business on the way home.

So, I arrived back home for lunch with Anne, then headed off for my next funeral of the day, to capture a few photos for the "Rise-n-Shine" newsletter. It was the final farewell of Ralph Weatherell of my Whitehorse Sub-Branch. I arrived at the Box Hill funeral parlour well before official start time, but too late to secure a seat. Four of our Nashos were already seated, but the other four of us, with the gentlemanly aforethought of our era, decided that the ladies should be seated first, so we Nasho were left standing, along with 70-80 others of the family-and-friends-brigade, too many for the restricted seating in the chapel.

The funeral service commenced routinely on time and was about 30 minutes in when I started to feel unwell. I wanted to leave to find a seat somewhere, but I was hemmed in amongst the all-standing crowd of mourners. I endured this uncomfortable situation for about ten minutes when my mind and body were suddenly hijacked by the fairies.

The next thing I remember was being grabbed by my Nasho mates, who had noticed that my hands had started shaking uncontrollably as I tried to steady myself. They caught me before I plummeted to the floor, lowering me gradually, where I stayed prone on my right side until the service ended. The funeral parlour staff were thoroughly attentive to the unwelcome distraction of this semi-comatose person on their floor, but I was soon in the care of an off-duty emergency nurse who was among the mourners. The funeral service continued unabated, although the mourners had dual performances playing out before them. Their concentration was evenly divided between the poor deceased Ralph lying horizontal in his coffin at the front, and Petey-boy lying horizontal on the floor at the rear. My apologies Ralph for upstaging your final farewell song, Frank Sinatra's "I did it my way", because I made you do it my way instead.

Although on the floor trying to be inconspicuous, my many caring guardian angels decided that I should stay on the floor until Ralph's service was complete. During the unplanned diversion, the technical staff operating the audio/visual equipment, instead of playing "The Last Post", inadvertently played "Come to the Cookhouse Door Boys, Come to the Cookhouse Door".

All the time I was on the floor, the off-duty emergency nurse repeatedly checked my pulse in my right hand. She was behind me, out of my view. Also kneeling in front of me was one of the funeral parlour ladies who held my left hand comfortingly. Thus, both my hands were completely in the control of others, in reality probably to prevent me from trying to stand up. Such an attempt by an old bloke like me would be akin to a motorist performing a 5-point turn in a very narrow street.

Being on the floor, one sees the world differently. My Nasho mates were all at least eight feet six inches tall, with very prominent flared nostrils when viewed from far below, and worried frowns creasing their brows.

My off-duty emergency nurse, Erin, called 000 for an ambulance which arrived about 20 minutes later. I was told she had shouted at them on the phone to shorten the response time. The ambulance arrived and I was immediately placed on the ambulance trolley, then moved into a private area within the funeral premises for assessment. The private area turned out to be the coffins display room. I held the sides of the trolley very tightly to avoid being slipped into one of the coffins, if my attention wavered.

One of the ambo's, Alec, was a newbie, and he was under the tutelage of his practised companion Matthew who laid out the plan to get me to hospital asap. I was given several choices, but we jointly decided that the William Anglis Hospital at Ferntree Gully was the best bet, because there were only four ambulances ramped there, whereas there were fourteen ambulances ramped at St. Vincent's.

It was ambo Alec's first ever call-out. He was a bit frazzled with the flush of excitement about now being on the front line. He had placed his lunchbox on the ground in front of the ambulance. He forgot all about it until he heard a squelch and saw his thermos cap on a trajectory to heaven, and a lazy river of pumpkin soup slowly snaking across the road. While Alec drove, Mathew ministered to me, undertaking all his reporting duties on his laptop, while frequently checking my lucidity with questions for me to put my mind to. I did indeed know that Anthony Albanese was the Prime Minister, although I muttered my answer. During the 30 minutes journey, he asked me where we were. I have travelled on Burwood Highway many times, but it's very different travelling head first backwards, on one's back, with only the tops of gum trees and street lights to navigate by.

Indeed, as Ambo Matthew had warned, there were four ambulances ramped outside the Emergency Department. My ambos by this time had refrained from asking lucidity questions, as I took over the questions, now centred on the whys and wherefores of the public health system in Victoria. We remained in relevant conversation for about four hours, during which I learned that the ambos cannot do a hospital hand-pass to the ED staff, because the ambulance trolley which was my temporary bed was also my life support system, with all manner of heart monitoring wires connected to me. Disconnection of the wires had the potential to disconnect me from my life. Anne also arrived at the ED at about this time and joined the conversation.

The triage process determines order of precedence, and the four casualties from the other four ramped ambulances were closer to death's doorstep than I was. Regardless of the seriousness of the condition of the next patient, there are only so many ED cubicles to place them. I was eventually wheeled into my cubicle about three hours later, slid from my trolley onto the hospital bed, disconnected from my trolley apparatus and reconnected to the fixed ED equipment in its place. A handover conference was then conducted at the foot of my bed, between the paramedics, the nurses and the doctors, with the all-important lucidity question to me ... "Who is the Premier of Victoria?" "Jacinta Allan" I replied, to which there were many indecipherable mutterings emanating from mouths near and far. They all then signed on-or-off, and with a pat on my foot, my ambo friends departed with a friendly wave and a "you'll be right mate". The "system" worked for me, albeit slowly. The several bottlenecks are all attributed to limited and finite resources and insufficient funding. All the staff were friendly as they went patiently and professionally about their work, never complaining about the delays, just resignedly accepting the status quo.

My next guardian angel was the student doctor assigned to my case. Anne noted his surname and asked if he was related to Professor such-and-such, of the same surname, being one of my specialists. Yes indeed, "He's my dad". So, another guardian angel clicked in.

With lots of checks of the electronic equipment, some blood samples which tested for residual markers from a possible heart attack (there were none), the senior duty doctor was then summoned for the final diagnosis and prognosis. He wrote “a well looking elderly gentleman sitting up in bed ... too much cumulative standing at multiple funerals same day. Tell your Nasho mates to avoid funerals on the same day!”. He then transferred me into the care of Anne for the trip home, for the resumption of editorial normality tomorrow.

The above was an account of a day in the life of a newsletter editor.

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NATIONAL SERVICE UK:

The then British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announced in May 2024 that the Conservative Party (The Tories) would introduce mandatory National Service if it won the UK general election on 4th July 2024.

Well, this promise was not tested, because the ruling Tories lost to the Labour Party in a landslide. However, we Nashos in Australia may be interested about the UK National Service experience, compared with the Australian experience.

Here is a little bit about what the Brits know about the proposed policy. The United Kingdom abolished its previous national service scheme in 1960.

What is the difference between national service and conscription, according to the UK view:

Conscription means people are forced to join the armed forces for a certain period of time. Mr Sunak's national service proposal falls some way short of that. British 18-year-olds would be compelled to volunteer in the community or enter a 12-month placement in the armed forces.

What would national service look like in the UK? Teenagers would be given two choices if the Conservatives win the general election and enforce national service in the UK. Under the proposed plan, 18-year-olds would either join the military full time for a year or volunteer one weekend a month in community services.

The first option would be volunteering in the community, giving up one weekend a month for a year. Placements could include helping the National Health Service, police and fire services, and some charities.

A full-time placement in the armed forces for 12 months would be the second option. Young people who chose this option would "learn and take part in logistics, cyber security, procurement or civil response operations," the Conservatives said.

National service would apply to young people in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

Would there be punishments for refusing? The proposed scheme would not force anyone to take part in military training and teenagers would not be sent to prison for refusing to comply. But it would be required by law and there would be non-criminal sanctions for refusing.

How much will it cost? The estimated cost is 2.5 billion British pounds (\$4.8 billion) a year. The Conservatives said it would be paid for partly by taking 1.5 billion pounds from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, which was set up in 2022 to regenerate poor communities.

What has the reaction been? The exact details on how the scheme would work are not clear and there are questions still to be answered.

But the Conservatives' political rivals have been quick to seize on the announcement. Labour's Shadow Defence Secretary John Healey called the proposed plan a "distraction" from defence failures, while Shadow Chancellor Rachel Reeves called it a "gimmick". Liberal Democrat leader Sir Ed Davey described the scheme as "nonsense" and said the armed forces needed "professional soldiers, not people there for one year". Scottish National Party deputy leader Keith Brown told the BBC the Conservatives were "trying to put a sticking plaster on the future of young people and the future of the armed forces and it's not going to work". Nigel Farage, the honorary president of the right-wing Reform UK party, called the plan a "joke". Admiral Alan West, a former chief of naval staff, said the plan was "bonkers". "I'm delighted if more young people become aware of defence and are involved ... but this idea is basically bonkers," he said. "We need to spend more on defence, and – by doing what he's [Sunak] suggesting – money will be sucked out of defence." (All these political oriented statements should be taken with a grain salt).

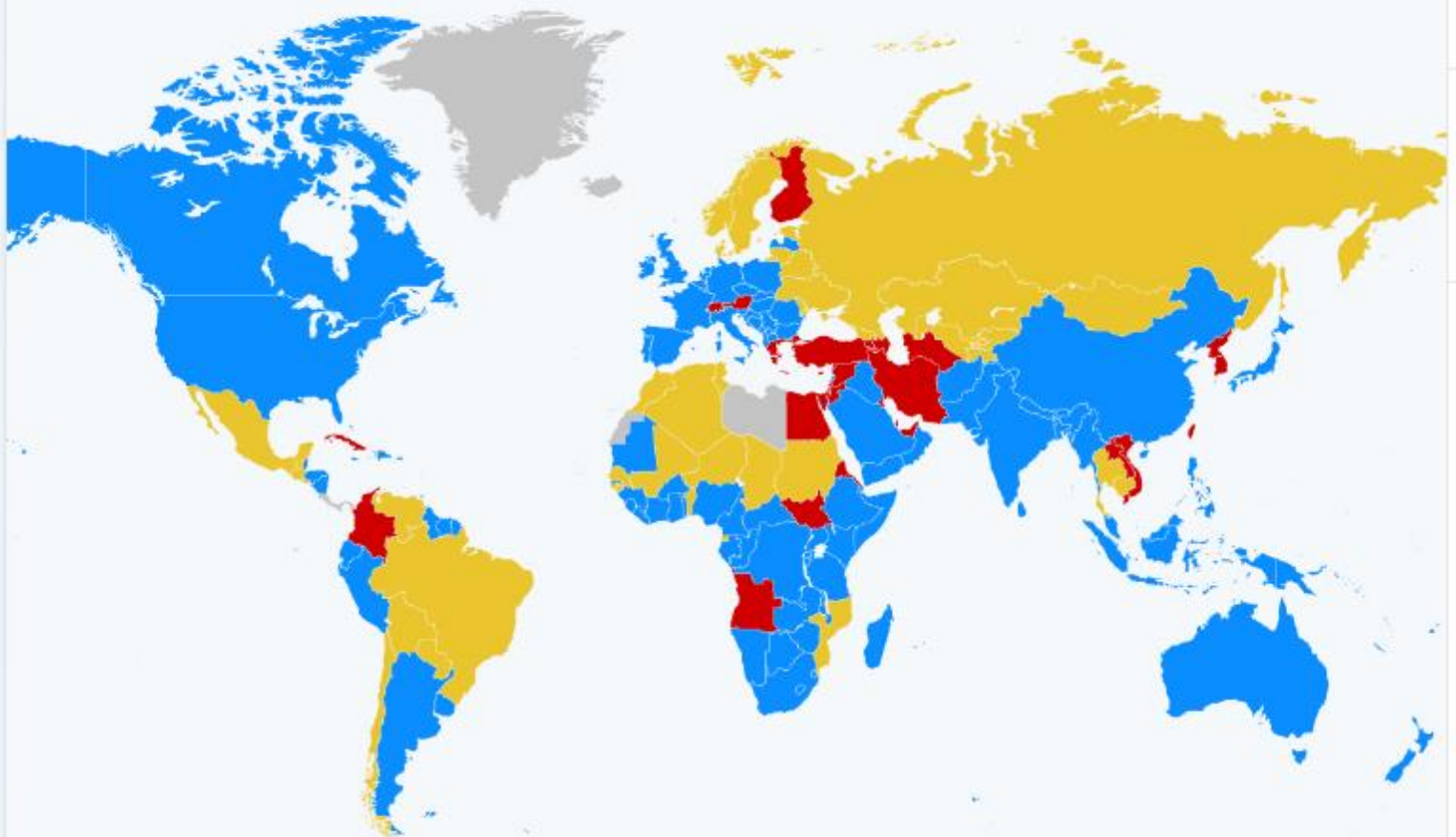
Well, none of this happened because the Tories lost the election on 4/7. How much the National Service proposal influenced the election result, can only be guessed, but I believe other factors held more sway.

WHICH COUNTRIES HAVE MANDATORY MILITARY SERVICE?:

Which countries have mandatory military service? According to the World Population Review, there are 66 countries that have mandatory military service. On the map below, particularly note the Middle East countries.

The State of Military Conscription Around the World

- No armed forces/no information
- Limited conscription
- No enforced conscription
- Conscription



As of January 2023

Source: Respective militaries

Among them are:

Russia: From the age of 18, all men are required to complete 12 months of military service or the equivalent training during higher education.

Denmark: A four-month period in the military is required for men but they can postpone until after completing further education.

Norway: Completing 19 months of military service is required for those aged 19-44 but the scheme is selective, with less than 10,000 people accepted in 2023.

Israel: After high school, most young Israelis must serve in the military, with men serving 32 months and women serving 24 months.

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REGIONAL SECURITY AND PACIFIC PARTNERSHIPS: RECRUITING PACIFIC ISLANDERS INTO THE AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE:

By Bec Shrimpton and Zach Lambert:

The security and stability of the South Pacific and Australia are deeply intertwined. Australian Government policies have for more than a decade consistently prioritised the Pacific for international engagement, including in defence, development and diplomacy. The Australian Government's 'Pacific Step-up', first announced in 2016, delivered a heightened level of effort by Canberra in the region, as did Australia's strong support for the Pacific Islands Forum's Boe Declaration. The Albanese government's increased policy focus on the region, and on a coordinated whole-of-government approach to the Pacific, demonstrates the centrality of our immediate region to the Australian Government's strategic planning.

Australia's 2023 Defence Strategic Review (DSR) outlined the need for innovative and bold approaches to recruitment and retention in the Australian Defence Force (ADF), which is seeking to grow by 30% by 2040 but is not yet hitting existing recruitment targets. Budget figures released for 2023 show that ADF personnel numbers dropped by more than 1,300, or more than 2% of the total force. The Budget projections for 2024 to 2026 indicate that the government requires more than 6,000 additional personnel—in addition to replacing those lost through attrition in the next three years—to meet stated growth requirements. In the context of a competitive recruitment environment in Australia, especially for skilled

labour, that trend indicates that the Defence organisation will struggle to meet forecast requirements using existing recruitment options and will need to seek alternatives. This challenge of competition for talent and to retain skilled workers is not limited to defence nor Australia. It is an economy wide issue, and global.

As a result, there has been an ‘on-again, off-again’ public debate about whether the Australian Government should consider the recruitment of foreigners into the ADF, with a specific focus on Pacific islanders. Obviously, such an initiative could help the ADF’s recruitment numbers, but, importantly, it could open up economic, skills and training opportunities for Pacific islanders. It could also provide a powerful cultural and practical engagement opportunity for the ADF, while also providing Australia with avenues to help shape the region’s security environment in positive and culturally relevant ways. Such recruitment—especially if it involves bilateral agreements between governments—would also put Pacific Island governments in a unique position to inform Australia’s security assessments and contribute to shared outcomes. Those outcomes could include enhanced regional interoperability, especially for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) and supporting combined stability operations, and stronger two-way cultural and social engagement, bolstering familiarity and understanding between the ADF and Pacific Island countries (PICs). There are, of course, arguments against such recruitment. For example, the recruitment of Pacific islanders to fight for Australia could be viewed by some as ‘colonialist’ in a region understandably sensitive to that history. But this concern could be addressed through PICs retaining agency through bilateral arrangements. In addition, any scheme seeking to relocate workers to Australia could be seen as taking skills from a much smaller nation, and risking brain and skills drains. We look at these, and other, considerations in this report.

Below, we identify and assess the key recruitment and retention problems faced by the ADF that foreign recruitment, particularly the recruitment of Pacific islanders, may help to resolve. Our report then delves into various arguments for and against the recruitment of Pacific islanders into the ADF including background information that contextualises the current debate. Ultimately, there are many benefits to opening up pathways for Pacific islanders to serve in the ADF, with the clear caveat that any process to formally establish a program must be culturally and politically sensitive, be informed by detailed risk and impact assessment, and have strong monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in place.

We then explore three options for the recruitment of Pacific islanders:

- Direct recruiting from the Pacific region into the ADF

- Closer integration and operation between existing Australian and PIC forces

A broader partnership model drawing on lessons from the US's 'compacts of free association' and from the UK's defence recruitment initiatives.

We analyse key impacts that those options may have, both in the Pacific and for the ADF. The potential policy options offered aren't exhaustive. However, they are plausible and represent different approaches (which could be combined) to achieve outcomes related to ADF recruitment and retention as well as to improved regional collective security.

A critical consideration in developing these options was a two-way flow of benefit: from the Pacific to Australia and from Australia back to the region. For example, we recommend that, where possible, Pacific recruits receive focused training in HADR, which would help build sovereign PIC capabilities and facilitate the application of learned skills upon recruits' return to their home countries.

An important part of this research was ensuring that PIC military and security personnel were engaged and could feed into and shape the development of this research report, including the three options put forward for potential recruitment. This occurred in multiple ways. We collected feedback and perspectives through a dedicated roundtable discussion, in a series of interviews and then during the research process to ensure that this report was informed by regional, cultural and local considerations (see details regarding some of that data collection on page 16). The report captures five specific insights from the Pacific Island military and security community that are relevant in considering the implementation of any of the three recruitment options.

Finally, we acknowledge that further research is needed to resolve the complexity of some of the policy and legal issues associated with the options suggested. We nominate some specific areas that warrant further investigation.

About the authors

Bec Shrimpton: Bec is Director Defence Strategy and National Security at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute.

Zach Lambert: Zach Lambert is an active-duty Army officer who recently served on the divisional staff and is now instructing at the Australian Defence Force Academy.

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LAST VETERAN OF THE 'SCRAP IRON FLOTILLA' TAKES HIS FINAL VOYAGE:



On 23 May 2024, Able Seaman Ronald (Ron) William Frederick Young (S/4282), sailed into the sunset just after his 102nd birthday. Ron served on HMAS Vendetta as a gunner, during the period she was in the Mediterranean, at the time of the siege. In fact, at the start of the siege HMAS Vendetta was anchored in Tobruk harbour to bolster the garrison's anti-aircraft defences. Around the 16th of April 1941, she was ordered to return to Alexandria, Egypt where she eventually joined the legendary Scrap Iron Flotilla until October 1941, and successfully completed 39 individual passages between Alexandria and Tobruk as part of the 'Tobruk Ferry Service', often referred to as the 'Spud Run'. The success of the soldiers holding out during the siege would not have been possible without the incredible efforts of the navy. As Ron was a Vendetta crewmember during this time, most siege veterans would consider him a fellow 'Rat of Tobruk'.

Ron is survived by four children and many grandchildren and great grandchildren. They should be very proud of their family patriarch.



The Scrap Iron Flotilla was an Australian destroyer group that operated in the Mediterranean and Pacific during World War II. The name was bestowed upon the group by Nazi Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels. It was intended as an insult, but our Australian mates in WW2 turned it into a compliment, and along with the similar German insult, Rats of Tobruk, we have celebrated the insults ever since.

The flotilla consisted of five Royal Australian Navy (RAN) destroyers. The five ships of the flotilla had been Royal Navy ships that had been built and served during the First World War and transferred to the RAN in the 1930s.

- HMAS Waterhen was sunk in the Mediterranean in 1941,
- HMAS Vampire was sunk in the Indian Ocean in 1942, and
- HMAS Voyager was sunk near Timor in 1942.
- HMAS Voyager was sunk near Timor in 1942.
- HMAS Stuart and
- HMAS Vendetta survived the war.

The Tobruk Ferry Service (also known as the Tobruk Ferry Run) was the name given to the force of Royal Navy and Royal Australian Navy ships involved in the supply of Allied forces during the Siege of Tobruk.

The aim of the Ferry Service was to keep the besieged Allied forces supplied with ammunition, gun barrels, and medical supplies, while evacuating wounded personnel.

The initial supply runs to Tobruk were performed by the ships of the 10th Destroyer Flotilla (which included the five First World War-era destroyers of the Australian 'Scrap Iron Flotilla') operating independently. A typical run saw a destroyer leave Alexandria early in the morning, after spending the night loading, then sail for Tobruk, where the ship would arrive around midnight. After supplies were unloaded and wounded loaded, the destroyer would sail for Mersa Matruh, where the wounded were exchanged for more supplies. The destroyer would return to Tobruk for a second evening, then head back to Alexandria. The danger of attack by air and sea prompted the admiral at Alexandria, after advice from one of the destroyer captains, to send ships in pairs: they could help protect each other, and if one were disabled or sunk, the second could provide assistance or recover survivors.

During the operation of the Ferry Service, two destroyers, three sloops, and nineteen smaller vessels were lost. The ships lost included:

- HMAS Waterhen, destroyer]
- HMS Defender, destroyer
- HMS Auckland, sloop
- HMAS Parramatta, sloop
- HMS Ladybird, gunboat
- HMS Latona, cruiser minelayer

My cousin William Snape, who was generally referred to in the family as Cobs, short for Cobber, joined the Royal Australian Navy and was assigned to HMAS Parramatta, for its maiden assignment. The sloop HMAS Parramatta was named after the World War I era destroyer of the same name, which was decommissioned in 1928.



The sloop category fits between a corvette and a frigate. HMAS Parramatta was 266 feet long and had a top speed of sixteen-and-a-half knots, much smaller and slower than a destroyer, but very suitable for convoy escort duty.

It had twin steam turbines, was oil fired, with engine room duties performed by Cobs in his role as supply assistant/stoker. Although stokers were originally required for shovelling coal into the boilers of coal fired ships, the term was retained colloquially for any naval rating associated with the boilers used for generating steam.

In Peter Plowman's book *Across the Sea to War*, he recounts a section of the official war correspondence of Kenneth Slessor who wrote while voyaging in Convoy US3, the third Australian convoy:

HMAS Parramatta was initially engaged on convoy escort duty in the narrow waters of the Red Sea, protecting the series of Australian troop transport convoys in the final leg of their journey to Suez.

“Anything was welcome to break the endless monotony of the voyage, and on 27 February 1941, when the convoy was off Aden, a small warship approached the convoy. As it got within the range of my field glasses, I noticed to my great surprise that it bears the name Parramatta, and is evidently the Australian sloop built at Cockatoo Island Dockyard last year. All the Australians on our boat crowded to the side to wave to the crew of Parramatta.”

Cobs paid the ultimate price on 27 November 1941, going down on *HMAS Parramatta* in the Mediterranean, torpedoed by U-559 while escorting and protecting merchant vessels, colloquially running the gauntlet of the Tobruk Ferry Service, supplying the Rats of Tobruk. *Parramatta* had been hit by a single torpedo, but the damage was so significant that the captain only had time to order 'abandon ship' before it capsized and sank with only twenty-four survivors. Cobs shares his watery grave with 138 of his crew mates.

His name in bronze is in evidence for all to see at the Australian War Memorial. There have been four HMA Ships named *Parramatta*. The fourth and current bearer of the name is the frigate launched in 2000, which has inherited the “LIBYA 1941” battle honours of Cobs’ sloop *Parramatta*.

LAST VETERAN OF THE ‘RATS OF TOBRUK’:



Australia's last Rat of Tobruk, Tom Pritchard, has died aged 102. The WWII veteran was the last living link to an incredible chapter of history.

The World War II veteran was the the last direct link with the 14,000 Australian servicemen who held the Libyan port of Tobruk against the German Africa Corps in 1941 during the Siege of Tobruk, a vital battle for the Allied forces.

Born in Victoria in 1921, Pritchard enlisted in the army in 1940 despite lying about his age, and was assigned to the 2/5th Field Ambulance, which was eventually attached to the 18th Infantry Brigade.

He served as an -ambulance attendant during the eight-month-long Siege of Tobruk, which is regarded as a stand-out battle for Australia's soldiers, and in Milne Bay, New Guinea and Balikpapan in Borneo.

Mr Pritchard had been the last standing Rat for 12 months.

"The biggest thing for us, was that he was the link," said secretary of the Rats of Tobruk Association Lachlan Gaylard.



Tom Pritchard (left) with Ron Williamson, who was president of the Rats of Tobruk Association until his death in June 2016.

"You were able to say to him, do you remember this, I've read this, do you know anything about that?" Mr Gaylard said that often Mr Pritchard would say no, but then come back with an answer two days later.

"But now, we've lost that," he said. "I think we took for granted, a little bit, that he was the last one left."

The Rats were born out of humour and pride, after being described by the enemy as living 'like rats in caves'.

Head of Military History at the Australian War Memorial Karl James said the named stemmed from their pride in their ability to hold Tobruk for so many months despite their miserable conditions and having their backs to the ocean.

"That in itself was a really positive story, hence they embraced it [being a Rat of Tobruk]," he said.

The association, which was formed by the returned veterans looking for continued comradeship, will have to "pick up the flame" that was carried by Mr Pritchard, says Mr Gaylard. "We risk it [Tobruk] becoming a ghost of our past," he said. "And it shouldn't."

The efforts of the Australian soldiers holding down the Tobruk harbour during the Siege of Tobruk was pivotal to the Allied victory in North Africa. "The important part of the siege was that if you didn't hold that harbour at Tobruk, you couldn't control the Mediterranean or Middle East," said Mr Gaylard. "So really, it was the linchpin for that whole conflict, down to 14,000 Australians," he said. "It is extraordinary."

Mr Pritchard's duties during the siege involved collecting wounded soldiers and taking them to the dressing stations and to the hospital at the harbour, the association wrote.

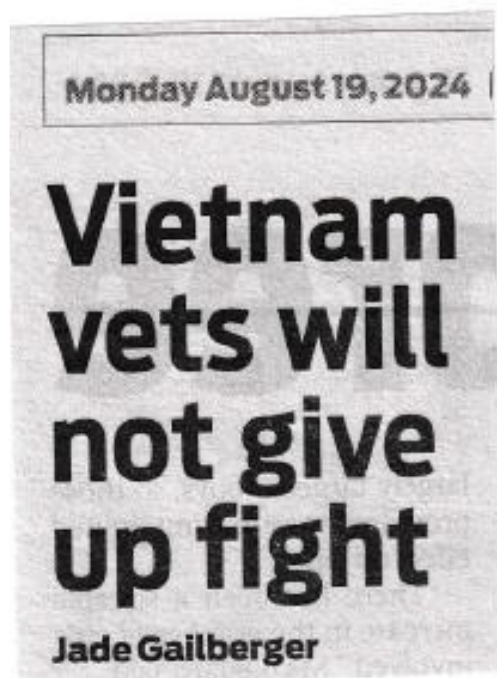
"This was no mean feat, as it meant having to balance and hold onto 4 or 5 stretchers in the ambulance, in an effort to steady them, while travelling on terrible roads; a journey which would sometimes take an hour or two," the association wrote.

It said before his training, Mr Pritchard admitted he could "barely stick a bandaid on".

(Sources: Various Media sources all quoting secretary of the Rats of Tobruk Association Lachlan Gaylard.)

THE FIGHT FOR THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM CAMPAIGN MEDALS:

Our National Direct Member Richard Barry OAM has been a long time champion of the endeavour to have a cohort of Vietnam Veterans, including National Servicemen, to be awarded the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal. All had fewer than the requisite 181 days of service in Vietnam, mostly due to them being returned home earlier than their expected full terms. The article below appeared in most of the national dailies on 19th August.



Vietnam veterans are refusing to give up on a crusade to have the valiant service of 2500 national servicemen fully recognised, amid fears they will die fighting for a medal.

While in opposition, senior Labor MPs threw their support behind a long-running battle to award Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medals to people who served at least 60 days.

But the Albanese government maintains its hands are tied, as people who served for less than 181 days due to their contract conditions continue to be denied medals.

The government maintains this is because it does not have the legal authority to change the criteria to include people who served for less than six months – unless they were killed on active service, wounded in action, or captured and later released or escaped.

The Diggers, who on Sunday commemorated Vietnam Veterans' Day, believe the government does have the authority.

levels of expensive credit card debt in half over the past 10 years, but some of the pain has been transferred to buy now.

At least 25 national servicemen Mr Barry has assisted have received the medal in the past few months, with a further 70 pending approvals.

But he has sadly buried two of his mates without the medal.

In 2022, the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal set a new precedent, reinterpreting "wounded by the enemy" to include psychological injury such as PTSD.

However, Mr Barry said many who fought gallantly were sent home suffering from life-threatening diseases or from terrible accidents.

Narrabri RSL sub-branch president Nicole Gallagher said: "No veteran should have to wait 53 years to be awarded a medal". In a recent letter to Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles, she said: "It is a national disgrace that we are still not acknowledging the hardships and terrible treatment these Veterans endured".

Richard Barry OAM was a member of the NSAA New South Wales Branch which finished at the end of 2023. Many NSW members, including Richard, wished to continue as NSAA members, and this was made possible by amending the NSAA National Rules & Bylaws to create a new membership category of Direct National Members.



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THE NATIONAL SERVICEMEN'S ASSOCIATION COMMEMORATIVE EVENT AT THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL SEPTEMBER 2024:

This event on 6/9/2024, in recognition of the service and sacrifice of all National Servicemen 1951-1959 & 1965-1972, was sponsored by the Director of the Australian War Memorial, Mr. Matt Anderson PSM. Matt is also the National Patron of the NSAA. The commemorative address was delivered by Mr. Frank Miller OAM, a member of the NSAA and the Chairman of the Officer Training Unit Association (Scheyville).



Matt Anderson PSM showing his Nasho father's slouch hat.



Frank Miller OAM delivering the commemorative address, as copied below.

Post the Second World war, some 291,000 young Australian men experienced time in the Nation's Defence Forces as National Servicemen – 227,000 in the first scheme between 1951 and 1959 and 64,000 in the second from 1965 and 1972.

The two differed markedly. The first included everyone in the age group and, apart from a three-month stint of recruit training, did not impact their working careers. A period in the Citizens' Forces followed their initial time.

More controversially, the second was far from all-inclusive and involved two years (later reduced to eighteen months) full time. Selection was by ballot. Of the 804,000 who registered 63,000 ended up in the Army. Of these, 15,400 served in Vietnam.

However, common to both schemes was the twelve weeks or so of recruit training. This involved relentless instructions on marching, weapon craft, navigation, fieldwork, hygiene, dress sense and presentation, PT and many other military necessities. Inspections were carried out on anything and everything – petty or not. For many, it was their first introduction to communal showering.

Most importantly, they were shrieked at and belittled by Corporals and Sergeants – almost nonstop! Tales of recruits being admonished over the river washed white pebbles outside their hut “How do you expect them to grow if they’re not properly raked!!”

They broke away the shell and rebuilt you all as one!

The most unfortunate surname for a young recruit would be Bloggs. Poor old Private Bloggs was always used, by way of example, as the archetypical “Dozy Digger” – forever getting things wrong and drastically needing to “switch on!”

The best part of recruit training was that it finally ended!

However, it did teach you self-confidence, dress and presentation, and how to get on with others from very different backgrounds and cultures. It brought about substantial personal change – and for the better.

I often think when people talk of straightening wayward youth of the day through military service they have recruit training in mind.

The military’s job is defence – not instilling good behaviour in young people who are off the rails!

Let me be clear I was always in favour of National Service – **provided it didn’t include me!**

But it did – and here I am!

For the '65 – '72 people, so much depended on the Corps to which you were allotted and your subsequent posting.

Spending time in the permanent Army was a fascinating experience. I came across a large number of exceptionally capable individuals who had made a career of the Regular Army.

In the Service there was much to learn on how a huge body of people, from the smallest Section to the full Division, and more, was controlled and managed. It was done very well.

One truly admirable feature of Army training, across all levels, was the doctrine that activities - battles, manoeuvres and so on - be planned step by step from the beginning through to the very end. **Preparation and planning was the catch cry.** I still see this today as an outstanding management discipline.

In this sense National Service taught much from which Industry could benefit.



For most National Servicemen there was travel, new and interesting experiences – and so much to learn. You weren't stuck in a boring office all day! As well, there was weekly sport, PT and parades etc. It wasn't dull.

Every effort was made for those with special qualifications or trades to use these in their service.

I did hear of one Nasho being posted to a role requiring him to do a Master's Degree in the field for which he had just qualified before his call up.

On the negative side of the ledger, 212 NS men made the ultimate sacrifice in Vietnam and many more were seriously wounded. PTSD took its toll in the years following along with a number of other war related problems. As always with war and longer-term absence, relationships were tested with many failing.

Some second scheme Nashos also found on discharge, despite the National Service Act, their careers were two years behind where they would otherwise have been. I found myself in that situation and solved it by leaving to a more enlightened employer.

So what benefits did National Service bring to the Country? It made a material contribution to its Defence situation. It gave a sense of National pride to those who participated. It grew callow youths into mature adults through knowing how to get on with people from all walks of life – as well as how to act with discipline - either on the receiving end or giving it to others.

The Army itself enjoyed a longer-term influx of people with much in demand skills and qualifications.



Of the 1,688 National Servicemen who graduated from the Officer training Unit Scheyville, over 200 took the opportunity to make a full-time career in the Army. Many others elected to serve on in the Reserve. National Service proved a fruitful long term recruitment tool in this instance.

Yes, there is a strong cohort who look back at their conscription as having caused a huge and adverse impact on their lives – many with justification.

The ballot was a ballot in the truest sense of the word.

Much is made of military mateship. Why is it that so many, from both schemes, joined the National Servicemen's Association? It wasn't just to catch up individual mates with whom they had served. There were too many intakes for that to happen.

It was to join in with people to seek and enjoy the military camaraderie they had found while in the service.

So strong was this attraction that the NSAA had over 20,000 members in its first years.

They share, in many ways, a different language involving Service acronyms and stories that would be incomprehensible to civilians. It's a pleasure to go back to those days of long ago with them.

So strong was this calling that their combined efforts have led to the establishment of this magnificent National Service Memorial we see here today. It stands as a monument to the contribution to Australia's Defence efforts by all who answered their call-up.

A few years ago I attended a morning tea put on by my old university for people who'd studied there all those decades past. Talking to one chap I asked if he had been called up. He replied that his birthday had been drawn and then smugly added "I managed to get deferred every year until National Service was cancelled".

It left me thinking.

In no way, shape or form did I ever want to spend two years of my life in the Army. I was a most reluctant recruit!

However, looking back over my life I am certain I would have been a lesser person without my time in the Service. It opened a whole new dimension of experience – most of which has been of long term benefit to me.

It would be hard to reconcile my attitude today with my mind set on that dreary July morning - when I presented at Melbourne's Swan Street barracks to start my military penury.

Ask a thousand different Australians who had been NASHOS in either scheme, you could get a thousand different answers. I am sure of one thing though, most would have the experience on the plus side of the ledger of life.

Transcript supplied by Frank Miller OAM



DO YOU HAVE A STORY?

If you have a story about yourself to tell, our readers would love to read it. Please email it to PDNorman1945@gmail.com

LONGSTANDING VETERAN ORGANISATION FOLDS:



Oxley National Servicemen's Association Secretary Tony Winter and Tamworth RSL Sub-Branch President David Howells shaking hands after signing a Memorandum of Understanding between the two local veterans' organisations. Picture by Gareth Gardner

Jonathan Hawes

TAMWORTH'S National servicemen, or "Nashos", are finding a new home after more than 25 years.

The Oxley National Servicemen's Association (ONSA) will officially be absorbed by the Tamworth RSL Sub-Branch following an announcement that the former's parent organisation will close in 2026.

The announcement prompted fears among many Nashos across the country that people would begin to forget their sacrifice, but locally the Tamworth RSL has stepped in.

The ONSA started with about 180 members, and has steadily declined to fewer than 40 with several members over the age of 90.

Former ONSA secretary Tony Winter said their "latest funeral" was just last week.

"It's sad, but it's inevitable that the organisation folds. We're all getting older," Mr

Winter said.

"We developed the idea of this Memorandum of Understanding to indicate we're very serious about joining forces with the RSL."

The memorandum, signed on Wednesday, sets out the integration process for the two groups including the transfer of all records and assets to the RSL Sub-Branch.

"That's one of the most important things."

The Sub-Branch will take on the ONSA's mission of providing advice to veterans and their families on pensions, benefits, and other entitlements, as well as conducting commemorative services.

It's also receiving \$5000 from the Nashos organisation specifically earmarked for the "development, maintenance, and longevity" of the the Tamworth National Servicemen's Association

allowed to join the RSL.

The second cohort of Nashos formed the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia in 1979. Eight years later, the National Servicemen's Association of Australia (Nashos) was founded with sub-branches scattered across the country.

"That, to me, is the significant part of the National Servicemen's Organisation. You've got us oldies, who are now in our 90s, and the Vietnam boys who formed their own organisation," Mr Stevenson said.

It's sad, but it's inevitable that the organisation folds. We're all getting older.

ONSA secretary Tony Winter

Memorial Wall in front of the city's train station.

Between 1951 and 1972, almost 300,000 young men were called into two separate schemes for compulsory training in the navy, army, and air force, where 212 died in active service in Borneo

and Vietnam.

"The 51 lot, which Tony and I were part of, were called up for Korea," former ONSA treasurer Keith Stevenson said.

These men did not qualify for Department of Veterans' Affairs benefits nor were they



Mr Winter, Mr Howells and ONSA treasurer Keith Stevenson. Picture by Gareth Gardner

THE SUPERSEDED NSAA WEBSITE:

The website administered by former NSAA National President Hugh Williams is no longer valid. Do not go there because the information is well out of date. Instead go to the official NSAA website <https://www.nashoaustralia.org.au/index.html> as per below:

THE OFFICIAL NSAA WEBSITE:



This QR Code will link you to the <https://www.nashoaustralia.org.au/index.html> website. However don't click on the image above. Instead, using your smartphone, open the camera icon and focus on the QR code above. A link suggestion will appear. Select the link and the website should open at the home page which looks like this.

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The official Incorporated Association
 ABN: [67 616 946 832](https://abn.gov.au/abn/67616946832)
 Incorporated in SA 8 November 1996 - Reg No: A0023247R
 Registered with ASIC - ARBN: [076 835 298](https://asic.gov.au/abn/076835298) - 20 December 1996

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When you get to the home page, click on any of the options spread across the black bar, to open the content. This <https://www.nashoaustralia.org.au/index.html> website is being progressively reviewed, updated and corrected, If you have any suggestions please email pdnorman1945@gmail.com.

The next edition of “Nasho” is due out circa early 2025.