Australia and the Vietnam War
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**Introductory Activity**
Would you go to war? 12

## TOPIC 1

**Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam War**

Focus Questions:
- What was the Vietnam War?
- Why did Australia become involved?
- Was this a popular decision?
- What was the nature of the Australian involvement?

## TOPIC 2

**Life in Vietnam**

Focus Questions:
- What was life like for the Vietnamese?
- Who were the Allies?
- Who were the enemy?
- What was life like for the Australian soldiers in Vietnam?

## TOPIC 3

**The experience of battle**

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- How did the system of national service work?
- Did people support or oppose it?
- Did people support or oppose the war?

## TOPIC 6

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- What happened in Vietnam after the Australians left?
- How were the veterans received back into Australian society?

## TOPIC 7

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Focus Questions:
- What has happened to Australian veterans since the war?
- What has been the experience of Vietnamese refugees to Australia?

## TOPIC 8

**Commemoration**

Focus Questions:
- How has the Vietnam War been commemorated in Australia?
- What is its meaning for you today?
Introduction for teachers

Using *Australia and the Vietnam War* in the classroom

**The resource**  
*Australia and the Vietnam War* has been produced by the Department of Veterans’ Affairs as part of the Australian Government’s Commemorations program, *Saluting Their Service*.

**Educational aim**  
The aim of this education resource is to provide teachers and students with self-contained classroom-ready materials and teaching strategies to explore the experiences of Australians and the Vietnam War. It provides a rich collection of information and evidence for developing students’ knowledge and ideas about those experiences, and encourages students to talk to people in their own communities who lived through the period.

**Commemoration**  

The war led to significant political and social division in Australia, and the greatest involvement in public protests since the conscription debates of 1916–1917.

It is important that young people are aware of the nature and significance of this part of Australia’s wartime history. This education resource has been created to achieve that in Australian schools during 2007 and beyond.

**Components**  
This resource comprises three elements:

- a **Teachers’ Guidebook**, with classroom-ready documents and questions, and suggested teaching strategies for eight key aspects of the Australian Vietnam War experience;
- a **CD-ROM** containing image and film libraries to complement the print resources for each of the topics, and interactive activities for students to enhance their knowledge and understanding of the war; and
- a **DVD** of Episode 7 (*The Vietnam War*) of the *Australians At War* documentary series.

Each of these components can be used separately, or in an integrated way as suggested in each of the topics in the Teachers’ Guidebook.

**Eight topics**  
The eight topics covered provide students with resources for studying major aspects of the Australian experience of the Vietnam War — military, political and home front, and the continuing impacts of the war on the people involved and on Australian society.

*For teachers*, each topic starts with a **brief historical overview** to make sure that they feel confident with their own knowledge of the major content. There is also a **set of suggested teaching strategies** for using the materials at the major year levels, and **reproducible information and evidence pages** that include key questions and classroom activities. There are also suggestions for **integrating the print, CD-ROM and DVD activities** in the classroom. *(See pages 6–7 for more detail.)*

*For students*, each topic includes **focus questions** that will guide inquiry, **basic information to provide a knowledge framework**, and a variety of **primary source documents** to explore.

**Whose war experience?**  
Australian involvement in the Vietnam War included men from the Navy, and men and women from the Army and the Air Force, as well as several civilian organisations and groups. Some of these were involved in combat against the enemy. Many, particularly those in supply roles, were not. The experience of all these is included in this resource, but the emphasis is on understanding the most dangerous and traumatic experience, that of combat.

The resource also explores the home front experience. Most Australians supported the war for most of its course; some actively opposed the war — most did not. The home front experience also includes that of the families of the servicemen. Students are encouraged to understand this range of experiences and attitudes, and to take them into account in talking to people about their Vietnam War home front experience.

**Inquiry methodology**  
The resource uses an inquiry approach — students are provided with a variety of evidence and information, and they analyse this material to form their own conclusions about the nature of the Australians’ experiences.
Curriculum outcomes

The materials have been shaped around the History/SOSE (Studies of Society and Environment) curricula in all states and territories, with an emphasis on achieving key learning outcomes. A summary of curriculum links to the key learning outcomes for each state and territory can be seen on pages 8–9.

Curriculum levels

The resource has been designed for use with students from middle primary to upper secondary levels, but not all parts are suitable for all levels.

The print materials are most likely to be used with middle to upper secondary students. Where there are activities that are suitable for younger years, these are indicated in the teaching suggestions.

Many of the CD-ROM activities have been specifically designed for younger students.

Interviewing Australians from the period

The resource has been developed to encourage students to interview people in their local community about their memories and experiences of the war, whether as participants in Vietnam, civilians in Australia, or as refugees from Vietnam after the war.

There is a range of other activities that students can undertake while developing their knowledge and understanding of the period — writing letters, making film reports, exploring a Viet Cong tunnel system, interacting with the virtual base at Nui Dat and more — but all are ultimately directed towards helping students engage and empathise with people who lived through this time.

The relevance of history to today

While this resource is about the Australian experience of the Vietnam War, teachers may want to use the insights and understanding that are developed through the historical material to have students think about similar concepts today:

- Why do we go to war?
- Can and should people have an influence on such a decision?
- If war occurs, who should be sent to fight it?
- How do governments influence our attitudes?
- How would we behave in combat?
- What responsibility does society owe to those who go to war?
- What is the place of our military history and heritage in our sense of national identity?

These are all important civic and citizenship concepts that students can explore through an historical frame of reference as provided in this resource.

A search for truth

History is a search for truth — what happened, why, and with what effects and impacts. A study of the Vietnam War raises many difficulties that need to be taken into account.

- The Vietnam War was, and still is for many people, a very important part of their lives. It is central to some people’s sense of personal identity.
- It involves many myths. Some of these can be easily addressed because they are based on inaccuracies; others are more difficult, because they are important to national identity.
- A study involves considering the reliability of memory, and some people may take this as questioning their integrity and honesty.
- It involves looking at human behaviour in time of danger and stress, when both the best and worst aspects of people may appear more starkly than they do in normal life.
- It requires empathy, a difficult quality to develop and apply while at the same time making critical judgements.
- It involves an awareness of complexity, rather than accepting generalisations.

This resource seeks to help students address these challenges, to make their study of the war accessible and engaging, and to help them come to their own conclusions and decisions based on a consideration of fair and representative evidence.

A disclaimer

The inquiry approach which is the guiding methodology of this resource requires students to be exposed to a fair and balanced range of evidence for them to develop their own conclusions. The Department of Veterans’ Affairs cannot be assumed to agree with or endorse any content or opinions expressed in websites or other publications quoted or referred to in this resource.
## Integrated learning activities  Print, CD-ROM and DVD

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| **TOPIC 5**  
On the home front | Knowledge and understanding: | Achieved by these elements: |
| --- | --- | --- |
| • Identify a variety of attitudes and values to the war and conscription debates  
• Appreciate that attitudes changed over time for many people  
• Understand the working of the national service system  
• Make a judgement about its fairness at the time | **Activity 1** Did Australians support the Vietnam War?  
**Activity 2** How did the national service system work?  
**Activity 3** Did Australians support conscription?  
**Activity 4** Who supported/opposed the war and why?  
**Activity 5** Making sense of the period  
**Activity 6** Interviewing people about their home front experiences | **Print activities**  
**CD-ROM activities**  
**DVD resource**  
Decide about National Service  
Compile a Photo Album  
The Vietnam War Chapter 5 |

| **TOPIC 6**  
Going home | Knowledge and understanding: | Achieved by these elements: |
| --- | --- | --- |
| • Empathise with the veterans’ experience of returning to Australia  
• Appreciate the reasons why some had difficulties after Vietnam  
• Devise strategies for dealing with some problems of memory as historical evidence | **Activity 1** What happened when the Australians left Vietnam?  
**Activity 2** Would you visit Vietnam today?  
**Activity 3** How did soldiers respond to their homecoming?  
**Activity 4** How do Vietnam veterans assess their service? | **Print activities**  
**CD-ROM activities**  
**DVD resource**  
Write a Diary Entry  
Analyse a Vietnam War Roll of Honour  
The Vietnam War Chapter 6 |

| **TOPIC 7**  
After the war | Knowledge and understanding: | Achieved by these elements: |
| --- | --- | --- |
| • Know about a range of health issues for Australian veterans of the Vietnam War  
• Be aware of and empathise with the problems facing those veterans whose health has suffered as a result of the war  
• Appreciate the nature of Vietnamese migration to Australia after the war | **Activity 1** What is the state of the health of Australia’s Vietnam veterans?  
**Activity 2** What has been the experience of Vietnamese refugees to Australia? | **Print activities**  
**CD-ROM activities**  
**DVD resource**  
Curate an Exhibition  
The Vietnam War Chapter 7 |

| **TOPIC 8**  
Commemoration | Knowledge and understanding: | Achieved by these elements: |
| --- | --- | --- |
| • Compare ways in which Australia’s Vietnam War has been commemorated over time  
• Analyse the place of the Vietnam War in the Anzac tradition  
• Determine its meaning for students today | **Activity 1** What is commemoration?  
**Activity 2** How has the Vietnam War been commemorated in Australia over time?  
**Activity 3** How would you commemorate the Australian experience of the Vietnam War? | **Print activities**  
**CD-ROM activities**  
**DVD resource**  
Explore the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial |
### ACT
**SOSE High School Band**

Australia in the 20th Century, exploring an issue in depth by concentrating on turning points that emphasise aspects of change and continuity.

### HISTORY
**11–12**

All courses based on the Course Framework for History should enable students to:

- Demonstrate knowledge, awareness and understanding of some significant people, places and events of the past
- Demonstrate a comprehension of change, continuity, diversity, unity, chance and chaos as factors in history
- Demonstrate skills necessary in solving problems of evidence, acknowledging sources and achieving independence in researching
- Recognise recurring or unifying themes in the subject matter of history
- Critically examine a diversity of voices about the past
- Think analytically, critically and creatively
- Argue and communicate according to the conventions of the discipline

### NSW
**HSIE Stage 3**

Change and continuity

- Significant events and people in Australian identity
- Principles of Australian democracy

**HISTORY Stage 5**

Topic 5: Australia in the Vietnam War Era

- How did the Australian government respond to the threat of communism after World War II?
- How did Australia become involved in the Vietnam War?
- How did various groups respond to Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam War?
- What was the impact of the war on Australia and/or neighbouring countries?

**MODERN HISTORY Stage 6**

Students investigate the key features and issues of the history of Australia 1945–1983.

Key features and issues include:

- The Menzies era – conservatism in a changing world:
  - Fear of communism
  - Reaction to the Vietnam War and development of popular protest movements

### NT
**SOSE Band 4**

Soc 4.1 Time, Continuity and Change

Analyse significant ideas, people and movements that have shaped societies

**SOSE Band 5**

Soc 5.1 Time, Continuity and Change

Analyse how past forces and events have shaped contemporary communities

**SOSE 5.1+ Time, Continuity and Change**

Analyse and critically evaluate how the context of historical movements and events change; influences and impact on national and global interpretations of history

**HISTORY Stage 2**

Depth Study – Topic 8 Remembering Australians in Wartime: Experiences and Myths, 1880 to the Present. Students select one or more wars or conflicts in which Australia was involved.

- The motivations of Australian people in supporting, and in opposing, Australia’s involvement in wars or conflicts
- War memorials, commemorative ceremonies, and creative works (eg art, literature, songs, photographs, and film) as ways of remembering Australians involved in wars or conflicts
- Changes in Australian society that resulted from Australia’s participation in wars or conflicts
- Australian people’s experiences overseas and in Australia during times of war or conflict

### QLD
**SOSE Level 5**

TCC 5.4 Students explain the consequences of Australia’s international relations on the development of a cohesive society

**SOSE Level 6**

TCC 6.5 Students develop criteria-based judgments about the ethical behaviour of people in the past

H5.4 Students present a diagrammatic overview to summarise the short- and long-term effects of a particular event on a population including war, poverty, introduction of new industries, or exploitation of children
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| **SA**  
**SOSE Standard 5** | 5.1 Critically analyses different interpretations of events, ideas and issues, including an understanding of the relationship between power and historical representation |

**HISTORY Stage 2**  
Depth Study — Topic 8 Remembering Australians in Wartime: Experiences and Myths, 1880 to the Present. Students select *one or more* wars or conflicts in which Australia was involved.  
- The motivations of Australian people in supporting, and in opposing, Australia's involvement in wars or conflicts  
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- Changes in Australian society that resulted from Australia's participation in wars or conflicts  
- Australian people's experiences overseas and in Australia during times of war or conflict |

| **TAS**  
**ESSENTIAL LEARNINGS Standard 4** | Social Responsibility — Understanding the past and creating preferred futures:  
- Understands how to evaluate evidence, viewpoints and decisions through investigating past, present and future contexts |

**ESSENTIAL LEARNINGS Standard 5** | Social Responsibility — Understanding the past and creating preferred futures:  
- Understands how to make predictions and take actions for preferred futures based on historical investigations, recognising the influence of evidence, perspective and context |

| **AUSTRALIAN STUDIES 11–12** | B. Political Issues  
Select TWO from the following topics:  
- National Identity and Independence  
- Whitlam, Crisis and Change  
- Australians at War |

| **VIC**  
**HISTORY Level 6** |  
Continuing significance of major events shaping society (eg Vietnam War)  
Analyse significant events shaping world history in the 20th Century (eg Cold War)  
Key changes in social and political values and attitudes in modern western society |

**AUSTRALIAN HISTORY VCE UNIT 3–4** | Debating Australia’s future 1960–2000  
One of four options:  
- Attitudes to the Vietnam War (Attitudes to Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam conflict, 1965 and 1970) |

| **WA**  
**SOSE 8–10** | Time, Continuity and Change Outcomes.  
Students should be taught:  
- that past people, events and ideas can be sequenced; that change, continuity and heritage are features of all societies; there are different interpretations of historical evidence which influence individual perspectives (world views)  
- that historical time periods have characteristic features; that people, events and ideas are linked; change and continuity have positive and negative impacts; there are different perspectives of people, events and ideas, each supported by historical evidence; that interpretation is influenced by personal and societal beliefs and values.  
- that trends and movements in history can be identified; that people, events and ideas are interrelated and can be compared and contrasted across time periods and cultures; change is viewed differently by particular individuals, groups or nations; that interpretations of historical evidence can be challenged |

| **HISTORY 12** | 20th Century: Shaping a Nation  
Areas of study:  
- Australia 1900–1945  
- Australia 1945–1990  
Students will develop the following key understandings with detailed investigation of at least one of the areas of study above.  
1.1 Australian identity reflects the changing nature of its society  
1.2 Australia has been affected by its international relations  
1.4 Australia has been affected by political events, crises and developments  
1.5 Australia has been influenced by the social and cultural experiences of its people |
There is a large and growing collection of materials on Vietnam. These are some that teachers and students will find most useful.

**Official histories of Australian involvement in South-East Asian conflicts 1948–1975**
- Peter Edwards, *A Nation at War*, Allen & Unwin in association with the Australian War Memorial, Sydney, 1997
- Peter Edwards with Gregory Pemberton, *Crises and Commitments*, Allen & Unwin in association with the Australian War Memorial, Sydney, 1992

**Histories of Australia in the Vietnam War (military and home front)**
- Terry Burstall, *Vietnam The Australian Dilemma*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 1993
- Peter Cook, *Australia and Vietnam 1965-1972*, La Trobe University, Melbourne, 1991
- Jeffrey Grey and Jeff Doyle, *Vietnam War, Myth and Memory*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1992
- John Moremon (ed), *Vietnam Our War — Our Peace*, Department of Veterans’ Affairs, Canberra, 2006
- George Odgers, *100 Years of Australians at War*, Lansdowne, Sydney, 1999

**Novels**
- David Alexander, *When The Buffalo Fight*, Hutchinson of Australia, Melbourne, 1980

**Long Tan and Coral/Balmoral**

**Oral history collections**
Photographic collections
Shaune Lakin, Contact – Photographs from the Australian War Memorial Collection, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 2006
Gary McKay and Elizabeth Stewart, Vietnam Shots, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2002

Memoirs and Reminiscences
Terry Burstall, A Soldier Returns, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 1990
Tim Bowden, One Crowded Hour, Collins Publishers Australia, Sydney, 1987
Bob Buick with Gary McKay, All Guts and No Glory, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2000
J F Cairns, Silence Kills, The Vietnam Moratorium Committee, Melbourne, 1970
Barrie Crowley, View From a Low Bough, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1997
Jean Debelle Lamensdorf, Write Home For Me, Random House Australia, Sydney, 2006
D J Dennis, One Day at a Time, UQP Brisbane, 1992
Peter Haran, Shockwave An Australian Combat Helicopter Crew in Vietnam, New Holland, Sydney, 2004
Peter Haran and Bob Kearney, Crossfire An Australian Reconnaissance Unit in Vietnam, New Holland, Sydney, 2001
Barry Heard, Well Done, Those Men, Scribe Publications, Melbourne, 2005
Siobhan McHugh, Minefields and Miniskirts, Doubleday, Sydney, 1993
Gary McKay, Sleeping With Your Ears Open, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1999
Mike Towers, A Jungle Circus, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1999
Denis Warner, Not Always on Horseback, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1997

Unit Histories
Bob Breen, First to Fight, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1988
Charles S Mollison, Long Tan and Beyond, Cobbs Crossing Publications, Woombye, 2004

Websites
ANZAC Day Commemoration Committee of Queensland http://www.warandidentity.com.au
Australians at War http://www.australiansatwar.gov.au
Australians at War Film Archive http://www.australiansatwarfilmarchive.gov.au
Australian War Memorial http://www.awm.gov.au
Digger History http://www.diggerhistory.info
Vietnam Veterans’ Association of Australia http://www.vvaa.org.au

Maps and travel guides

Films
Long Tan: The true story, 1993
The Sharp End, 1992
Eyes of the Tiger – Diary of a Dirty War, 2006
Jungle Rain, 2006
Introductory activity: Thinking about the Vietnam War

1. What do you know about the Vietnam War? Brainstorm to set out all your existing ideas and information.

Imagine that these people were coming to your class to talk to you about their experiences of the Vietnam War.

2. List a few questions you would like to ask each of them.

3. Share your questions with the class. From the whole list, choose the ‘top 10’ that you would ask the soldier, the protester and the Vietnamese person. Record the questions in a table like this:

| Questions I would like to ask people in Australia about their Vietnam War experiences: |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Soldier                        | Protester       | Vietnamese refugee |
|                                 |                 |                  |

What you have done is to start thinking about what the experience was like for people in a significant period of Australia’s history.

This resource, *Australia and the Vietnam War*, will help you develop your answers to these questions. It will also give you the confidence to invite real people who experienced the war into your classroom, and to put your questions to them.

It will help you to explore and answer your own questions, and you will be able to develop a questionnaire to use when interviewing people who lived during the period.

As you work through the resource materials you should record any new questions that you think of to ask these people. You can see more information and suggestions about interviewing people in your local community on pages 56, 80 and 98.
The decision to send an Australian infantry battalion to Vietnam is a grave one; these are inescapable obligations which fall on us because of our position, treaties and friendship. There was no alternative but to respond as we have.

A quotation on the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial

**FOCUS QUESTIONS:**

- What was the Vietnam War?
- Why did Australia become involved?
- Was this a popular decision?
- What was the nature of the Australian involvement?

Garden Island, Sydney, NSW, 27 March 1968. Troops of the 1st Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (1RAR), board the troop carrier HMAS Sydney prior to their departure for Vietnam.

AWM CUN/68/0129/EC
Teaching Suggestions

Background information

**Australian involvement**

Australia became deeply involved in the Vietnam War in 1965. On 29 April, Prime Minister Robert Menzies announced to Parliament that Australia would send combat troops to South Vietnam. Since 1962 Australia’s involvement was a small number of Australian Army Training Team Vietnam (AATTV) advisers sent to train South Vietnamese troops and a Royal Australian Air Force Transport Flight from 1964, but this was to be a substantial increase in our military commitment.

**Vietnam’s history**

For 2000 years Vietnam has alternated between being part of a Chinese state (111BC–932AD), a unified and independent state (932–1545, 1788–1847 and 1975 until today), a foreign colony (1843–1954), and a divided state (1545–1788 and 1954–1975). China was an ever-present factor on its northern border; during the 19th century France had invaded the area and created French Indochina — comprising Cochin, Annam and Tonkin (modern Vietnam), and what are now Cambodia and Laos — and in 1940 Japan invaded and seized control from the French.

**Viet Minh**

When the Japanese surrendered in 1945, the French returned. In the north, the Vietnamese nationalists, the Viet Minh, led by the communist Ho Chi Minh, fought against them for Vietnamese independence; in the south, British support, which did not last long, for the French made them more secure, though there were southern Viet Minh who continued to seek an independent Vietnam.

In 1954, the Viet Minh defeated the French at Dien Bien Phu in northern Vietnam, declared the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV or North Vietnam), and claimed that they were the legitimate government of all Vietnam. They did not control what soon became the Republic of Vietnam (RVN — South Vietnam), but supported local Viet Minh activity to destabilise the south.

**Geneva Accords**

A conference of the major world powers in Geneva in 1954 finally suggested a temporary division of Vietnam at the 17th parallel of latitude, with a vote of all Vietnamese to be held in July 1956 to decide on unification. The French signed an agreement for South Vietnam, but neither the United States of America (USA) nor the Vietnamese Emperor in South Vietnam, Bao Dai, committed themselves to it. The French now left South Vietnam, and Ngo Dinh Diem became President.

**Two Vietnams**

Many Viet Minh nationalists in the south continued to undermine the new South Vietnam Government and worked towards allowing the country to be unified under Ho Chi Minh. No vote on unification was ever held. The Americans increasingly became involved in supporting the South Vietnamese government, believing that if South Vietnam became communist, other neighbouring countries — Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Malaya — would also fall. This was the ‘domino’ theory.

**Australia’s attitude**

The Australian Government always presented the Vietnam War as one of a Chinese-supported communist invasion of the south by a dictatorial north, while those who opposed the war presented it as a nationalist and anti-colonial movement and a civil war that foreign powers ought not be involved in. This was also consistent with Australia’s role in the ‘Cold War’, as a defender of the democratic and capitalist countries, led by the United States of America, against those that were communist and socialist dominated, led by the USSR (Russia) and China.

**United States’ involvement**

By the end of 1964 the United States (US) had provided massive financial and other aid to Vietnam, and had 16,000 military advisers training South Vietnamese troops. It seemed to be doing it all alone and called for ‘more flags’ to be seen in Vietnam. The US now looked to Australia and other countries for support and wanted 200 more Australian military advisers in Vietnam. What would Australia do?

**Australia’s reaction**

Australia was unable to provide more advisors because of the expansion of the Australian Army with the introduction of conscription. When Australia responded on 29 April 1965 it was to send an infantry battalion to join American combat battalions that had already arrived in Vietnam.

The Australian decision to become involved, and to extend that involvement, was influenced by four major factors.

The first was an anti-communist and pro-democracy ideology. The potentially democratic South Vietnam seemed to be under attack from communism, with its political, economic and social implications.
There was also a fear of regional developments. China had become communist in 1949, Australia believed that Indonesia was likely to head that way, and there were strong communist movements in Laos, Malaysia and Thailand.

In 1964 Australia was in fact fighting Indonesians in the Malayan peninsula and Borneo during the Indonesian confrontation. In 1963, the United Nations which was administering the Dutch West New Guinea handed control to Indonesia. It looked like there could be a communist power on the borders of the Australian Territories of Papua and New Guinea.

The fourth element was the Australian Government’s belief that it needed to tie itself to the United States for its security in the region. Australia had ‘looked to America’ during World War II, and had served alongside it in the Korean War as part of a British Commonwealth force within the United Nations body of troops. It was also a member of two regional defence pacts: ANZUS (Australia, New Zealand and United States) and SEATO (Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation). But the United States did not share Australia’s belief that Indonesia might fall to communism and was therefore not willing to provide it with a security commitment.

Australian diplomats advised that the government could win favour with the United States by providing troops to the US commitment in Vietnam. By doing so it was hoped that we would demonstrate our reliability to the United States, and it would be more likely to help us against any regional threat. Australia now offered a combat battalion to the Americans and sought the assent of the South Vietnamese Government before making an announcement.

The circumstances in which the South Vietnamese Government requested the Australian battalion later became controversial. While the Australian Government was providing support for the United States, it was unwilling to make the commitment without an official request from the South Vietnamese Government. South Vietnam did not initiate the request but it explicitly approved the terms of the Australian announcement and gave its assent.

The decision was generally well-received and accepted in the community, with only one major newspaper, *The Australian*, opposing it from the start.

The AATTV continued to operate, generally in one- or two-man teams in a variety of places in South Vietnam, while the new combat troops — the 1st Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (1RAR), together with some logistical support elements — was sent to the province of Bien Hoa, just north of Saigon, to be part of the United States’ 173rd Independent Airborne Brigade.

Later forces (including increased infantry numbers as well as logistical support, RAAF helicopter, transport and bomber crews and maintenance support) would be mainly located in Phuoc Tuy Province and be able to operate independently rather than as part of an American formation. Supply was partly from the Royal Australian Navy vessels HMAS *Jeparit* and HMAS *Sydney*, and partly from the American supply base at Long Binh in Bien Hoa province. This autonomy suited the Australians, as they did not agree with the American tactical approach of using massive firepower to draw the enemy into high-casualty firefights. The Australians instead implemented the counter-guerrilla warfare they had learned fighting Communist insurgents in the jungles of Malaya, where the emphasis was on small, silent patrols to ambush the enemy and deny it access to the villages where it received its food, money, intelligence and recruits.

This emphasis on counter-terrorist warfare was to be the characteristic of most Australian Army contact with the enemy for the rest of the Australian involvement in the war.

Between 1962 and 1975 nearly 60,000 Australian troops and some civilian elements served in Vietnam. Most units were sent for twelve-month tours. At its height there were about 8000 Australian combat and logistical support troops in Vietnam at the one time.

The last unit to leave was the one that had been the first to arrive — the AATTV. The last Australian military commitment was a RAAF Hercules transport plane detachment that flew humanitarian missions, such as the evacuation of war orphans, into and out of South Vietnam as the war was drawing to an end.
2 Key learning outcomes

By the end of this topic students will be better able to:

- Consider their attitude to involvement in war
- Locate Vietnam on a map and describe its basic geography and history
- Understand the ‘domino theory’
- Consider a variety of reasons for Australian involvement in the war
- Understand the attitude of supporters and opponents of involvement at the time
- Decide if the Government was honest in its account of why it participated in the war
- Understand the nature of Australia’s military commitment to the war

3 Some suggested classroom strategies

**ACTIVITY 1**
This is a way of introducing students to a key concept in a content-neutral way, and with students being able to draw on their own knowledge of the modern world. Small-class discussion can be followed by general discussion. Alternatively, students could be told that they are the Australian electorate and have to vote in each case on whether to involve the nation. In this way they are simulating a national rather than a personal approach.

**ACTIVITY 2**
Small groups should work through the questions to gather basic information and understanding. At the end, direct the students back to the hypothetical situations in Activity 1 — they will now start to make specifically historical connections.

**ACTIVITY 3**
This is a shorthand way of covering a lot of material. If required, some students can be asked to look at the longer extracts and to report back to class. A key concept to discuss here is: Who makes a decision on war in a democracy? Should the people have a say on it? Or is that impracticable, or undesirable, or both?

**ACTIVITY 4**
This activity raises another significant concept: What is the public’s right to be given information on major public policy issues?

**ACTIVITY 5**
This allows students to start thinking about the varied nature of Australia’s military involvement. They can set up hypotheses that they will test in following topics. The activity can be undertaken in small groups or pairs, with each reporting back to the class on their ideas.

4 Interactive CD-ROM and DVD resources

On the Australia and the Vietnam War CD-ROM students can:

- Browse the Interactive Maps (Primary and Secondary)
- Browse the Interactive Timeline (Primary and Secondary)

Some discussion of the reasons for involvement in the war is on the DVD containing Episode 7 (The Vietnam War) from the Australians at War documentary series.
Imagine the following situations. Decide if you would support Australia going to war in each of these situations involving country X. Record your reason/s in the appropriate column. You will be asked to come back to look again at your responses later.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Australia go to war?</th>
<th>Reasons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(A) Australia has been attacked by country X.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(B) Country X is threatening to attack Australia.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C) Country X is building up its weapons and might attack Australia in the future.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(D) Country X is likely to be an enemy in the future so Australia should attack it first.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(E) An ally of Australia in the region has been attacked by country X.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(F) An ally of Australia in another part of the world has been attacked by country X.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(G) Australia attacks country X to replace a brutal dictator with a democratic system of government.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(H) Australia supports one side in a civil war in country X.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(I) Australia attacks country X because our biggest ally does and we want to make sure they stay bound to us if we need them to help us in the future.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(J) Under no circumstances would you support Australia going to war against country X.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Why was Australia involved in the Vietnam War?**

Between 1962 and 1972 Australia was part of the war in Vietnam between the South Vietnamese Government and the North Vietnamese Government.

1. Use an atlas or go to the CD-ROM map activity to identify Vietnam on this map.
2. How far is it from the nearest part of Australia?
3. Suggest reasons why Australia might be involved in a war in Vietnam.

The war in Vietnam has to be seen in a ‘Cold War’ context. The Cold War was a period from 1945 to 1991 of ideological conflict between capitalism/democracy and communism — involving mainly the United States of America and its allies, and the Soviet Union and its allies. Competition between these blocs for influence and power threatened to break out into ‘hot war’, with the fear that atomic missiles would be fired. There were many small or localised conflicts, but none actually drew the large powers into full-scale war.

Here are some events from the time that affected the conflict in Vietnam.

### Source 1: Timeline of some Cold War events in the Asian region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>Japanese surrender, ending World War II.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>Communist guerrillas seek to take control of Malaya from the British.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>Australia supports Indonesian independence from the Dutch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>China becomes a communist country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950–1966</td>
<td>Australia provides military support to Malaya (later Malaysia).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950–1953</td>
<td>Korean War, United Nations troops (mainly from the United States of America and Australia) and North Korean and Chinese forces involved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>ANZUS defence alliance formed — Australia, New Zealand and the United States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>Ho Chi Minh’s communist and nationalist Viet Minh defeat the French who control Vietnam, and declare Vietnam as independent. They only control the northern half of Vietnam and seek to overthrow the government of South Vietnam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) formed — Australia, France, Great Britain, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, and the United States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959–1961</td>
<td>Communist rebels seek to take control of Laos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Australia introduces a limited form of conscription.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Indonesian troops mount a limited offensive in Borneo to destabilise Malaysia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Australia sends troops to fight the Indonesians in Borneo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Indonesian Government bans the Communist Party and thousands are murdered.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Look at this cartoon published in a popular Australian magazine.

7 What is the ‘red claw’?
8 Where is it coming from?
9 Where is it going?
10 What is it doing?
11 How does the cartoonist want the reader to react to this image?
12 What is the message of this cartoon?
13 How might such a cartoon be useful evidence to help us understand people’s attitudes and ideas at the time?
14 What might be the weaknesses or limitations of using such evidence to find out these things?

If Indo-China and Burma were lost to the Communists — indeed if either of them was lost — Thailand would be immediately outflanked and it would be difficult if not impossible for Thailand successfully to resist heavy Communist pressure unless very substantial help were afforded it from without. If Thailand were lost to the Communists, the large export surplus of Siamese rice which is important for Malaya and many of the countries would cease to be available. In other words, the internal position in Malaya could deteriorate substantially even before any question of direct military aggression against Malaya from the north arose … If South-East Asia and Malaya fell to the Communists, the position in Indonesia would become much less secure and inevitably the security of Australia itself would be directly imperilled.


This statement describes the ‘domino theory’. What does ‘domino theory’ mean?

Not all Australians accepted this ‘domino theory’. What might be the limitations or weaknesses in it?

Look back at your answer to Question 3 above. Would you add or change anything?

In 1962 Australia sent a small number of Australian Army Training Team (AATTV) advisers to train South Vietnamese troops. In 1964 a RAAF Transport Flight was sent to Vietnam. In 1965 the Government decided to increase this commitment greatly by sending a battalion (about 800 men) of combat troops. Here are parts of the Prime Minister’s 1965 announcement of the reasons for committing combat forces to Vietnam, and the response of the Opposition Australian Labor Party to it.
Prime Minister Robert Menzies: The Australian Government is now in receipt of a request from the Government of South Viet Nam for further military assistance. We have decided and this has been after close consultation with the Government of the United States — to provide an infantry battalion for service in South Viet Nam.

There can be no doubt of the gravity of the situation in South Viet Nam. There is ample evidence to show that with the support of the North Vietnamese regime and other Communist powers, the Viet Cong has been preparing on a more substantial scale than ... [before] insurgency action designed to destroy South Vietnamese Government control, and to disrupt by violence the life of the local people.

We have not of course come to this decision without the closest attention to the question of defence priorities. We do not and must not overlook the point that our alliances, as well as providing guarantees and assurances for our security, make demands upon us. We have commitments to bear in mind, and [preparations to make against] ... the possibility of other developments in the region which could make demands on our Australian defence capacity.

Assessing all this, it is our judgment that the decision to commit a battalion in South Viet Nam represents the most useful additional contribution which we can make to the defence of the region at this time. The takeover of South Viet Nam would be a direct military threat to Australia and all the countries of South and South-East Asia. It must be seen as part of a thrust by Communist China between the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

Opposition Leader Arthur Calwell: [O]n behalf of all my colleagues of Her Majesty's Opposition, I say that we oppose the Government's decision to send 800 men to fight in Vietnam. We oppose it firmly and completely ...

We do not think it will help the fight against Communism. On the contrary, we believe it will harm that fight in the long term. We do not believe it will promote the welfare of the people of Vietnam. On the contrary, we believe it will prolong and deepen the suffering of that unhappy people so that Australia's very name may become a term of reproach among them. We do not believe that it represents a wise or even intelligent response to the challenge of Chinese power ... We of the Labour Party do not believe that this decision serves, or is consistent with, the immediate strategic interests of Australia. On the contrary, we believe that, by sending one quarter of our pitifully small effective military strength to distant Vietnam, this Government dangerously denudes Australia and its immediate strategic environs of effective defence power. Thus, for all these and other reasons, we believe we have no choice but to oppose this decision in the name of Australia and of Australia's security.

I propose to show that the Government's decision rests on three false assumptions: An erroneous view of the nature of the war in Vietnam; a failure to understand the nature of the Communist challenge; and a false notion as to the interests of America and her allies. No debate on the Government's decision can proceed, or even begin, unless we make an attempt to understand the nature of the war in Vietnam. Indeed, this is the crux of the matter; for unless we understand the nature of the war, we cannot understand what Australia's correct role in it should be.

Both men had the same information about what was happening in Vietnam. Why could they and their parties have such different responses to it?

Go back to Activity 1. Identify any situations that are based on the Vietnam War. How did you respond to them? Do you think you would have supported Australia's involvement in the war in 1965?

What factors might have most influenced your decision?
Did people support Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam War?

People are not usually given the chance to decide if they want their country to go to war. But we can find out if they supported that decision or not.

The ways usually used by historians to try to find out include looking at how public opinion is expressed — in newspapers, public opinion polls and elections.

**SOURCE 1** Editorial reactions to the announcement of Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam War

1. Look at these reactions from the major newspapers about Australia’s commitment of combat troops to the Vietnam War. Place a ✔ on those that seem to be supporting the decision, a ✗ beside those that seem to be opposing it, and a ? where you cannot tell.

2. What is your conclusion from this evidence about Australians’ likely attitude to involvement in the war?

---

Here is some more evidence.

**SOURCE 2** A cartoon comment on churches and war

![Cartoon with churches and war theme](image)

*The Australian, 8 April 1966*

3 What difficulties does the cartoonist say that churches have with war?

4 Do you think people’s religious beliefs or church membership would be an influential element in their decision whether to support war or not? Explain your reasons.

**SOURCE 3** Public opinion poll closest to the date of the commitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poll date</th>
<th>Continue to fight in Vietnam (%)</th>
<th>Bring forces back now (%)</th>
<th>Undecided (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 1965</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOURCE 4** Federal election results before and after the commitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>House of Representatives</th>
<th>Senate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1963</td>
<td>1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal*</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country Party*</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DLP*</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* denotes parties supporting involvement in the war


5 Do these sources support or challenge your answer to Question 2? Explain why.
Did the Government tell the truth about Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam War?

There has been debate about whether Prime Minister Menzies told the truth in his speech to Parliament. You can be a historian and decide for yourself on this controversial issue.

The Prime Minister said in the speech quoted in Activity 2: ‘The Australian Government is now in receipt of a request from the Government of South Viet Nam for further military assistance. We have decided — and this has been after close consultation with the Government of the United States — to provide an infantry battalion for service in South Viet Nam.’

1. According to this speech, who requested the troops?
2. Who agreed to send the troops?
3. What was the role of the United States?

Is this true? Historian Michael Sexton says that the following events happened in this order:

A. The Australian Government wanted to offer troops to help the United States. It decided it would offer a battalion (about 800 men plus 100 others for logistical support).

B. The US finally agreed, but required that the request come from the Government of South Vietnam.

C. The Australian Government did not want to make the announcement until it had received this request from the Government of South Vietnam.

D. Reporter Alan Reid of The Daily Telegraph learned about the decision and published it.

E. Prime Minister Menzies now had to announce the decision, but he had not yet received a request from the South Vietnamese Government for the troops.

F. Australia’s Ambassador in Saigon sent a message saying that the Vietnamese Government would make a statement that ‘said in effect: At request of Vietnamese Government Australian Government has decided to send Battalion’.

G. Prime Minister Menzies made his announcement as quoted above.

H. Two hours after Menzies’ announcement the South Vietnamese Government issued this statement: ‘Upon the request of the Government of the Republic of Vietnam, the Government of Australia today approved the despatch to Vietnam of an Infantry Battalion together with logistical support to assist the Republic of Vietnam Armed forces in its struggle against armed aggression.’

I. Later that night Prime Minister Quot wrote to Ambassador Anderson: ‘I have the honor to refer to your letter … confirming the Australian Government’s offer to send to Vietnam an infantry battalion … in assisting the defence of the Republic of Vietnam. I wish to confirm my government’s acceptance of this offer …’

Based on Michael Sexton, War For The Asking, New Holland, Sydney, 2002, passim

4. Do you think the Prime Minister lied to or misled the Australian people? If so, was it justified? If not, do you think it would ever be justified? Explain your reasons.

Your Conclusion
5. Why do you think Australia went to war in Vietnam?
6. Was this involvement justified?

You can see a letter from US President Johnson to Prime Minister Menzies in the interactive timeline for 1964
Imagine that you heard a newsflash today that Australia was about to send a military force to a country that was being invaded.

1. What is your immediate image of who we would send and what they would do once they were in this country?
   Your answer probably stressed the combat element — people who would do the fighting. But there is more to a military force than fighting. Look at the set of images on the next pages showing aspects of Australians’ military involvement in the Vietnam War.

2. Mark each image with the following letters where they apply: — those that show:
   - Combat troops
   - Support troops
   - Army personnel
   - Navy personnel
   - Air Force personnel
   - Civilians
   - RAN
   - S
   - A
   - RAAF
   - CIV

3. Look at your ‘codes’ for the photographs, and list the combat troops in the left hand column of this table. Then write beside each the sort of support that might be needed — for example, beside infantry soldier you might list ‘ammunition’, ‘replacement clothes’ ‘transport to the front’, and so on.

4. Write a short statement (or hypothesis) about what you now expect to discover about the nature and role of the Australian military experience in Vietnam. You will be able to test this as you work through the material in the following Topics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Combat element</th>
<th>Support element required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Members of an Australian civilian volunteer surgical team
AWM P03122.003

A lookout on HMAS Hobart in the battle zone
AWM P03884.001

A door gunner of a No 9 Squadron RAAF Iroquois helicopter
AWM VN/66/0047/16

Gunnurs from 103 Field Battery, Royal Australian Artillery
AWM EKN/66/0015/VN
Clerks sort mail at Nui Dat
AWM FAV/70/0828/VN

A welder in a workshop at Nui Dat
AWM P00310.016

On patrol
AWM WAR/70/0657/VN

De-mining engineers
AWM EKT/70/0059/VN
Helping in villages
AWM 314472

An Australian Army nurse at Vung Tau hospital
AWM CRO/67/1227/VN

An Army cook preparing a meal for troops
AWM SHA/85/0270/VN

A clerk at Nui Dat
AWM COM/69/0073/VN
Tanks and armoured personnel carriers supporting troops in the field

A Red Cross worker with wounded soldiers at 8 Field Hospital, Vung Tau

The Salvation Army ready with hot tea for the troops

Storemen keeping fit during a break from work

You can learn more about life for the Australians in Vietnam when you:
- Dress a Paper Doll
- Prepare for Patrol
- Explore the Camp at Nui Dat
From 1965 army units in Vietnam consisted of about 50% national servicemen and 50% regular army. About 20,000 national servicemen served in Vietnam.

A quotation on the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial

South Vietnamese civilians driving bullock carts loaded with firewood pass an Australian armoured personnel carrier (APC) escorting troops of the 1st Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (1RAR), during Operation Abilene, 35 miles from Saigon, March–April 1966.

AWM CUN/66/0299/VN

**FOCUS QUESTIONS:**

- What was life like for the Vietnamese?
- Who were the Allies?
- Who were the enemy?
- What was life like for the Australian soldiers in Vietnam?
**Background information**

Between 1962 and 1972 nearly 60 000 Australian men and women served in Vietnam. For many of the Australians, this was their first experience of Asia. They went into a place where the geography, economy, society, politics and social conditions of the country were all very different to what they knew at home.

The majority of Australian servicemen and women served in Phuoc Tuy province, south-east of Saigon, and sometimes assisted in neighbouring provinces. The Australians were given this province to control because it allowed good access by air and sea, and so could be reinforced or evacuated easily if necessary.

Most of the southern part of the province was swamp; much of the remaining area was jungle. There were a number of abandoned rubber plantations and some agricultural and fishing villages. The capital was Ba Ria, and there were few large towns.

After the move of 1 RAR from Bien Hoa province, north-east of Saigon, the Australian Task Force (1ATF) was established at Nui Dat in 1966. The 1st Australian Logistical Support Group (1ALSG) was set up at the same time at the port of Vung Tau, about 30 kilometres south of Nui Dat. The bases had to be created from nothing, and over time the conditions improved from canvas cities to largely well-established and permanent buildings, although the soldiers at Nui Dat always lived in tents.

Australia’s commitment was not only soldiers. The main Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) base was at Vung Tau, though there were helicopters kept at Nui Dat. There was also a bomber squadron based in Phan Rang, to the north. The RAAF role included logistical services — carrying equipment, supplies and service people to and from Vietnam and carrying casualties. The airline Qantas also provided a service between Australia and Saigon. Royal Australian Navy ships docked briefly in port at Vung Tau to load and unload troops and equipment. Some Australian warships took turns in patrolling with the American fleet in the South China Sea.

Support personnel at Nui Dat carried out a variety of jobs — such as repairing machinery, ordering food and equipment, transporting it, preparing meals, maintaining hygiene services. These men kept the combat troops functioning efficiently and effectively. The combat troops also lived in camp when they were not on patrol. Life in camp involved a variety of activities for them. There was essential personal equipment to clean and maintain. There might be brief training courses. There would be occasional guard duty or patrols around the wire perimeter. To relax soldiers might play sport. Occasionally there would be a concert provided by entertainers from Australia or locally. At night the focus might be on the local ‘boozers’, where soldiers would drink and talk, or play darts. For most of the infantry at Nui Dat these were only occasional ‘pleasures’ as they tended to be out on operations for 4-6 week periods, followed by a few days back in camp.
A highlight of the breaks would be a two or three day stay at 1ALSG, with its easy access to the town of Vung Tau. As they passed through local towns and villages on the way to Vung Tau, or on patrols, they saw the very different way of life of the typical Vietnamese. In towns the conditions seemed crowded and, to the soldiers, quite unsanitary. All food was sold in the local market, and there was no refrigeration to protect meat and other perishables. Most soldiers did not speak more than a few words of Vietnamese and the high-pitched tonal sounds of the Vietnamese language sounded alien to the young Australian men. The people were mostly women, old men and children, with most military-eligible aged men off fighting in the South Vietnamese Army, or for the Viet Cong. There were few lasting personal contacts with the local people — this meant that there were no close bonds developed that might have given Australians greater insight into the Vietnamese people and way of life, but also reduced the inevitable friction that arises between foreign troops and locals when they are in close contact. While the purpose of the Australian force in Vietnam was ill-defined by the politicians, for most Australian servicemen and women their task was clear — to help these people live better and more secure lives.

**Life at Vung Tau**

When the fighting soldiers from Nui Dat arrived for their Rest and Convalescence break (R&C) at Vung Tau they could make full use of the Peter Badcoe Centre, with its swimming pool, and access to all beach activities, including surfing, sailing and water skiing. From there, the soldiers could go into town.

Life for service personnel at Vung Tau was very different from that at Nui Dat, both in the way they lived and in contact with the local people. The base was in a secure area and there were few threats from the enemy. They had free access to the town and were not confined to the camp itself when they were off duty. Soldiers in 1ALSG had different tasks — they did not fight, but supported the fighting troops as clerks, storemen, mechanics, engineers. They provided food and equipment to the soldiers up the road at Nui Dat. They ran the main hospital, maintained communications equipment and patrolled the town of Vung Tau to help the local police maintain order. They did all that was needed to keep a small town running efficiently.

**Contacts between Vietnamese and Australians**

Australians had more contact with local people in Vung Tau than at Nui Dat. Many local people worked in the camp, as cleaners and office assistants. There was also greater direct contact in the town itself. Life in the port city of Vung Tau was quite different to that in the villages in one major way — the presence of bars. Soldiers of many nationalities — mainly Australian, New Zealand and American, but also some South Vietnamese, Koreans and Thais — could frequent the many bars in the town. The soldiers were looking for food, entertainment, and relaxation. This tended to bring both groups into contact with the worst sides of each — the local people seeking to exploit the soldiers, and the soldiers often behaving in an undisciplined and ‘ocker’ way. Australians rarely met with typical Vietnamese families, and Vietnamese families rarely shared time with Australians other than those seeking relief and relaxation between the periods of continuous stress and tension that the fighting soldiers faced.

**The enemy**

All this activity and organisation, with its good and bad impacts on the local people, had been created for one purpose — to fight the enemy. The enemy was usually referred to as ‘VC’, but its organisation was more complex than this single name suggests. There were four main enemy elements:

- **Local guerrillas**, who were often not well trained or well equipped. The guerrilla was the standard part-time communist soldier: a farmer by day, a soldier by night. He or she operated in an area around the home village, on such tasks as sabotage, terrorism, intelligence gathering and the guidance of provincial and regular forces who passed through the area.

- **Provincial Viet Cong (VC) troops**. The soldiers of this unit lay between the guerrilla and the regular soldier, but were well trained, equipped and armed.

- **Main Force VC units** were trained local fighters who lived in bases away from their local villages. These units were extremely well equipped and armed, often with the latest Chinese range of weapons, and operated in company or battalion groups in and out of the Province.

- **North Vietnamese Army (NVA) troops**, usually well equipped, very experienced and capable soldiers.

In 1966 when the Australians first arrived at Nui Dat, the estimated enemy strength in the province was about 5000 men and women; it was down to about 1400 by the time the Australians withdrew in 1972.
2 Key learning outcomes

By the end of this topic students will be better able to:

- Understand the geography and basic history of Vietnam
- Know which countries were involved in the war
- Understand the nature of the Australian military commitment to Vietnam
- Empathise with the life of Australian troops in camp

3 Suggested classroom approaches

**ACTIVITY 1** To understand the nature of the soldiers’ experience and to develop empathy with them, it is necessary to realise how large a cultural shock Vietnam was for most soldiers.

**ACTIVITY 2** This brief outline will help students be more aware of the two elements at work in the war: the external invasion element (North Vietnamese forces) and the internal local opposition (from southern supporters and sympathisers).

**ACTIVITY 3** This is a simple way of making sure that a potentially blinkered view of the war through Australian eyes is avoided, or at least reduced.

**ACTIVITY 4** Most people have an image of ‘the enemy’ as black pyjama-clad local peasants. This is only partly true. This activity will alert students to the existence of a variety of enemy soldiers, including women. This understanding will help students as they talk to veterans about their experiences.

**ACTIVITY 5** Again this is a simple way of introducing the idea of variety and complexity to students’ understanding of the Australian experiences in Vietnam.

4 Interactive CD-ROM and DVD resources

Interactives on the Australia and the Vietnam War CD-ROM that are appropriate learning tasks for this unit are:

- **Dress a Paper Doll** to help them identify different participants in the war (Primary)
- **Explore the Camp at Nui Dat** (Primary and Secondary)
- **Compile a Photo Album** (Primary and Secondary)

Some images of soldiers’ daily lives are on the DVD Episode 7 (The Vietnam War) from the Australians at War documentary series.
What was Vietnam like?

Here are some images of Vietnam. Imagine that these are all you have, and that you have never been to any place like it.

1. Record your impressions and reactions.

SOURCE 1 Some scenes from Vietnam

2. What are the main differences to Australia? Are there any similarities?

3. How do you think Australian soldiers between 1962 and 1972 might have reacted to this place? Why?

4. What other factors might have influenced how the Australian troops responded to the Vietnamese? You will be able to test these ideas if you interview veterans about their experiences.

Stephen Lewis, My Vietnam, My Vietnam Trust, Adelaide, 2002, pages 156 (Norm Cooper), 106 (Norm Cooper, Eric Watson), 107 (Richard Cranna)
Vietnam has a long history of invasion and resistance. According to Vietnamese legends, Vietnam dates back more than 4000 years. However, the most reliable sources show that their country’s history dates to about 2700 years ago.

For most of the period from 111 BC to early 10th century it was under the direct rule of China. Vietnam regained independence in 939 AD, but remained under strong Chinese influence.

Christian missionaries had been in Vietnam since the 17th century and in 1885 French forces took control of the area. The new area of Indochina was formed in October 1887 from Annam, Tonkin, Cochin China and the Khmer Republic. Laos was added in 1893.

In 1940, Japan invaded Indochina, coinciding with its ally, Germany’s, invasion of France. Keeping the German-controlled Vichy French colonial administration in place, the Japanese ruled from behind the scenes, with a Vietnamese Emperor as a powerless figurehead.

In 1941, Ho Chi Minh, a Communist revolutionary, returned to Vietnam and joined the Viet Minh, and led resistance to the Japanese.

In 1945, the Japanese surrendered and the Viet Minh claimed power in the north. However, in southern Vietnam the Japanese surrendered to British forces, which supported the return of the French. The French tried to regain the north, but were defeated in 1954 at Dien Bien Phu, leaving Ho Chi Minh as leader of North Vietnam and a western-backed Vietnamese government in charge in the south.

An international conference at Geneva developed an agreement in 1954 that temporarily partitioned the country into two states at the 17th parallel, with the Vietnamese people to be given a vote in 1956 to see who they wanted as the government of a reunified Vietnam.

The government of the South realised that they would lose any vote, so it was never held. The United States of America now began supporting South Vietnam, fearing that communism would spread throughout the region if they did not.

Supporters of Ho Chi Minh in South Vietnam now formed the National Liberation Front (NLF — also known as Viet Cong) to undermine the government of the South. The South’s President Ngo Dinh Diem began a harsh campaign against them.

This created great unrest among many South Vietnamese. Buddhist monks and nuns were joined by many students, business people, intellectuals and peasants in opposing Diem’s rule.

There was strong support for the NLF in many villages. To counteract this, Diem, supported by the United States, launched the Strategic Hamlets Program, to round up villagers and place them in ‘safe’ hamlets. The idea was to isolate the NLF from villagers, its base of support. The program created more opposition among people whose lives were being disrupted in this way.

By 1965, when Australian combat troops started arriving in South Vietnam, that nation was dependent on US support in its war against the local Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese Army forces.
Australia was not the only nation with service personnel in Vietnam. Here are those countries that were involved. (Note that ‘peak troop strength’ refers to the largest number of troops in the field at any one time, not the total number involved.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Peak troop strength</th>
<th>Deaths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South Vietnam</td>
<td>1,048,000</td>
<td>185,528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>543,400</td>
<td>57,702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>48,869</td>
<td>4,407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>7,672</td>
<td>520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Vietnam/Viet Cong</td>
<td>300,000</td>
<td>924,048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>11,568</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic of Taiwan</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


1. Cut out and paste in the appropriate national flag for each country.
2. Which countries made the greatest military contribution to the war?
3. You have seen why Australia was involved. Suggest reasons why most western nations were not involved. You will need to research this further to test your ideas.
Who were the enemy?

1. What is your image of the Viet Cong?
   Record your ideas, using these headings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appearance</th>
<th>Beliefs</th>
<th>Weapons</th>
<th>Tactics</th>
<th>Attitudes</th>
<th>Any other aspects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The enemy was usually referred to as ‘VC’, but its organisation was more complex than this single name suggests. There were four main enemy elements:

- **Local guerrillas**, who were often not well trained or well equipped. The guerrilla was the standard part-time communist soldier: a farmer by day, a soldier by night. He or she operated in an area around the home village, on such tasks as sabotage, terrorism, intelligence gathering and the guidance of provincial and regular forces who passed through the area.

- **Provincial Viet Cong (VC) troops**. The soldiers of this unit lay between the guerrilla and the regular soldier, but were well trained, equipped and armed.

- **Main Force VC units**. Trained local fighters who lived in bases away from their local villages. These units were extremely well equipped and armed, often with the latest Chinese range of weapons and operated in company or battalion groups in and out of the Province.

- **North Vietnamese Army (NVA) troops**, usually well equipped, very experienced and capable soldiers.

Look at the drawing of the Viet Cong and Khmer Rouge guerrillas in Source 1 (opposite).

2. What is familiar or expected?
3. What, if anything, surprises you?

You can learn more about the enemy if you:
- **Dress a Paper Doll**
- **Explore a Viet Cong Tunnel**

**SOURCE 1** Viet Cong and Khmer Rouge guerrillas

Here are some descriptions by Australians of their contact with and attitudes to the enemy in Vietnam.

**SOURCE 3** Attitudes of Australian soldiers to the enemy

---

**A**

I had no feeling one way or the other towards Vietnamese soldiers or Viet Cong, until a good friend of mine was killed and then I had that hatred of the enemy soldier. That stayed with me for years.

Bob Searl interview for the film *Eyes of the Tiger – Diary of a Dirty War*, Let’s Play Productions, 2006

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**B**

I hated them for what they did to their own people. There was a priest not far from us and he was decapitated and they put his head on a stake in a paddy field and a young village chief’s girl 13 years old hung upside down disembowelled … basically disembowelling village chiefs who got friendly with Allies and taking all their food and depriving villagers of their rice. They were terrible, they basically … fought their war with their own villagers with fear and intimidation and outrageous cowardly acts … I have high regard for [North Vietnamese Army soldiers]— they were soldiers and though they operated different to us they did not do what VC cadres did to their own people.


---

**C**

Another incident I recall was during a company ambush. A lone NVA soldier wearing a pith helmet came down the foot track and as it was thought he might have been a scout for a larger group, he wasn’t fired on and was allowed to go through the ambush. After about an hour or so the same soldier came back down the track and he was engaged and killed. His body was checked for documents and the interpreter was reading through his diary; the VC and NVA tended to keep diaries, write stories, poetry, and that sort of thing. It transpired that he was an NVA conscript who had separated from his unit and just wanted to go home to his family. A young kid who didn’t want to be in South Viet Nam. He was down there against his will, he just wanted to go home. Seeing the person behind the uniform personalises war. Sad.


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4 What different attitudes exist here?

5 Why might that variety exist?

5 What are the strengths and weaknesses of individual soldiers’ memories about their attitudes to the enemy?
What was life like for the Australian soldiers in camp?

Australian (and New Zealand) soldiers did not spend all their time in combat. They lived in camps between operations (in the case of the fighting troops), or for most of the time (in the case of support personnel).

Here are some images of life in the camp at Nui Dat.

1. Give each a brief caption that explains what is shown. (You can check the actual captions on page 40.)

2. Use them to comment on these aspects of life for the soldiers:
   - Living conditions
   - Facilities
   - Activities
   - Entertainment
   - Attitudes
   - Hygiene
   - Dress
   - Weather
   - Tasks
What do you think might have been the best aspects of this life?

What do you think might have been the worst aspects?

You can test your ideas by interviewing veterans.

CAPTIONS:
A Board at 1ATF base, showing the number of Viet Cong soldiers confirmed as having been killed by 3 platoon, A Company, 7th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (7RAR). AWM P01673.027
B Tent lines of 2 Platoon, A Company, 7th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (7RAR), at the 1ATF base. AWM P01706.019
C Soldiers sitting at a desk in the Operations Room, 1ATF base. AWM EKI/71/0681/VN
D An enthusiastic crowd of 1200 soldiers at the 1ATF base cheer two entertainers of an ABC concert party. AWM EKN/69/0190/VN
E The flooded area around the tent lines of the 5th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (5RAR), after monsoon rains. AWM P02177.002
F The all ranks showers and latrines for members of A Squadron, 3 Cavalry Regiment, at the 1ATF base. AWM P02354.030
G Sailing at Nui Dat. AWM FOD/71/0454/VN
H Outside toilet facilities set up at 1ATF base amongst the rubber trees. AWM EKT/71/0637/VN
I Aerial view of 1ATF base. AWM EKT/71/0648/VN
J Private Anthony Thomas Waide listens to music through a set of headphones while relaxing in his tent at the 1st Australian Task Force base at Nui Dat. AWM P04611.007
K Soldiers in their tent. AWM FOD/71/0498/VN
L Digger humour. AWM ERR/68/0550/VN
FOCUS QUESTIONS:

What was the nature of the Australians’ combat tactics?

What was it like to be in combat?

Then someone called out ‘contact’ and the bloke behind me swore
And we hooked in there for hours, then a god-almighty roar.
Frankie kicked a mine the day that mankind kicked the moon.
God help me, he was going home in June.

A quotation on the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial, taken from the song I Was Only Nineteen (A Walk in the Light Green), Redgum, 1983

Typical of the load carried by Australian soldiers on operations is that of Sergeant Peter Buckney of Grovely, Qld.

AWM WAR/70/0028/VN
The Australian presence in Vietnam

From 1966 Australian forces from the Army and Air Force were based mainly in Phuoc Tuy province in Vietnam, though there was a squadron of Canberra bombers at Phan Rang airbase to the north, Headquarters staff in Vung Tau, and AATTV soldiers were spread throughout the country. Naval supply ships docked at Vung Tau and operated with US fleets in the South China Sea.

The role of the force

The role of a combat force is usually to engage the enemy and defeat it.

This was how the Americans saw their role in Vietnam, but it was not how the Australian commanders saw their own role. Rather, they applied the theory of counter-revolutionary warfare they had learned recently in Malaya: the enemy should be denied access to its areas of supply — the local villages — and in this way it would wither and die, rather than be destroyed in any spectacular way.

This would be achieved in three main ways: by village cordon and search; by search and destroy of enemy camps; and by patrol and ambush.

Village cordon and search

A village cordon and search involved the Australians surrounding a village after dusk and stopping any movement in or out by enemy soldiers or supporters. Everyone knew that there was a curfew between dusk and dawn, so any movement during the night was presumed to be by the enemy. At dawn the troops would move in and search the village for any enemy soldiers, weapons or supplies. South Vietnamese Army officials would check papers and question people. If tunnel complexes were found, engineers (‘tunnel rats’) would explore them. Australian military and civilian personnel would at the same time provide health and dental checks and treatment — trying to win the villagers’ hearts and minds while their bodies were contained there. Families found to have helped the enemy would have their house destroyed.

Patrol and ambush

A second major tactic was patrolling and ambushing. A company would be taken into the jungle by road or helicopter and it would then move slowly and quietly to a pre-determined area, based on intelligence reports or known activity in the area and set an overnight ambush. Soldiers always had to be careful to avoid detection by the enemy, to avoid enemy ambushes and to avoid booby-traps — mines, or other devices designed to mutilate and disable numbers of men as much as to kill them. These operations required constant vigilance and put the men under constant stress. They might be out for three to six weeks, with limited food and water and little chance of real rest during the operation. Helicopters would re-supply water and combat rations every five days or so, as required.

Search and destroy

The third main type of action was the most hated — the search and destroy mission. This required approaching an enemy stronghold, which was usually almost impossible to see before actually arriving on top of it, but which was sited to allow devastating defensive fire to be unleashed against the approaching Australian troops. The base would then be searched and destroyed. These operations were conducted by larger groups than for ambushes and included armoured personnel carriers and often tanks.

Other tasks

There were also regular perimeter patrols around the Nui Dat camp and troops were used to protect Fire Support Bases — areas where artillery was set up to allow the patrolling troops a greater area of operation (or Tactical Area of Responsibility — TAOR) away from Nui Dat to cover more of the province.

The RAAF and RAN experience

The RAAF crewed helicopters for a variety of tasks in the war — as gunships, for transportation of people and equipment, for medical evacuations from the sites of contacts. Often these activities were carried out under enemy fire. They also flew and maintained Canberra bombers, and transport planes — mainly the Caribou and Hercules. Several aircraft were damaged or destroyed through enemy activities. RAAF service personnel also maintained and guarded the planes and their crews, and provided all the facilities needed at airports and bases.

The Royal Australian Navy provided the troop carrier HMAS Sydney and the supply ship HMAS Jeparit. The Sydney was considered a prime target and had warship and sometimes submarine escort on its trips. The ships were also guarded in port by Navy divers. Several Australian warships provided covering fire for ground operations, and some came under enemy fire. Some Navy helicopter crews also operated with Allied forces.
Large-scale battles were rare, but are the best known of the actions that Australians were involved in during the war. For example, the Battle of Long Tan (1966) was a fierce fight that involved 108 Australian infantry soldiers against an estimated 3500 Vietnamese, until reinforcements arrived; the Battles of Coral and Balmoral (1968) lasted intermittently over 26 days and saw Australia's largest casualty rate for one operation, 25 dead; and the Battle of Binh Ba (1969), a fierce six-hour contact fought in a village, a rare event for Australians in the Vietnam War.

Tet Offensive 1968

Australian troops had some involvement in the famous Tet Offensive of 1968. During this offensive North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces launched simultaneous attacks at over 100 sites in South Vietnam. Australian troops fought them in an attack on the provincial capital, Ba Ria. The Viet Cong and North Vietnamese suffered a devastating military defeat in these attacks, but they won an overwhelming tactical victory as media reports emphasised the horror of the war and the apparent strength of the enemy in being able to attack even the United States embassy building in Saigon.

Features of the Australian experience of combat

Some key elements in the Australian experience of combat in Vietnam were:

- the small-scale nature of many operations — this was generally a war fought at the platoon (about 30 men) or at best company level (about 120 men), rather than the large battalion scale, with the main officers being the young and inexperienced second lieutenants who were in the line of fire with their men, and their section non-commissioned officers (NCOs);

- the role of armoured personnel carriers (APCs), with their ability to bring fresh troops to an operation;

- the role of artillery, able to bring huge firepower with almost pinpoint accuracy to help troops engaged in operations;

- the use of helicopters, able to move troops to a position, re-supply them every 5–7 days and evacuate casualties from the battlefield to the hospital operating table usually within 30 minutes. Most soldiers were not killed outright in a firefight and the ability to treat the wounded so quickly meant the saving of many lives;

- the use of field radio sets to communicate with headquarters and co-ordinate swift support when needed;

- the professionalism of the Australian troops, whether professional regular soldiers or conscripts;

- the qualities of leadership in the field from officers, NCOs and men — largely the result of effective training.

Behaviour in combat

How did Australians behave in combat? Most men did not see much combat action, even on patrols. Most of the patrol was boring routine. But there was the knowledge that at any moment the routine could be shattered. When that happened, in nearly all cases training kicked in and men responded in appropriate ways. Nearly all showed the courage to endure and behave well. In some cases there was heroism — that unexpected and uncommon response by one person that goes beyond what others do in the same situation.

Some felt the exhilaration of battle, as well as its terribleness.

Peer pressure, training, trust, mateship, courage, hatred or a seeking of vengeance, and sometimes acceptance — all played their part in men being able to face combat. Many soldiers believed that mines, rather than actual fighting, were the worst aspect of their experience. A mine was not necessarily set to kill a man. It was enough to injure and disable him. Once a man was injured the whole unit was crippled, at least temporarily. The mine also created fear and apprehension, and could lead to men concentrating only on their next step and not looking out for the enemy. Some expressed the desire to die rather than survive as disabled, but most of those who were injured were keen to resume life.

A study of a typical battalion, 8RAR, shows that most men did not shoot accurately under the pressure of combat. The vegetation, fear, excitement, nerves and even a reluctance to kill another person meant that many enemy soldiers escaped even from very close combat.

Accusations

Many Australian soldiers saw horrors and other brutal realities of war, but most behaved as morally and ethically as could be done in the circumstances. There are no known examples of atrocities or abuses among Australians like the My Lai massacre by American troops. All available evidence about the Australians suggests strongly that they generally operated ethically and honourably. The battalion histories and the many books of reminiscences being written occasionally report aspects that bring them no credit — not burying dead enemy properly, killing the badly wounded, shooting enemy who had surrendered or who were clearly no threat, looting the dead — but these are isolated and not typical incidents.
2 Key outcomes

By the end of this topic students will be better able to:

- Understand how the Australians fought the war
- Empathise with the situation of servicemen in combat
- Describe the Battle of Long Tan
- Appreciate the horrific nature of war
- Understand the qualities needed by servicemen and women

3 Classroom activities

ACTIVITY 1

The activities in this unit are designed to help students explore the nature of combat in Vietnam. It will help if they are asked to make explicit their existing ideas, some of which may be inaccurate or not true to the Australian experience.

ACTIVITY 2

This activity helps students start to ‘test’ their ideas. The photographs are all official ones and these rarely showed any actual combat, or any details of Australian casualties. Some of the documents in the next activity are much more explicit and teachers may prefer not to show students the more graphic evidence.

ACTIVITY 3

This activity contains a great deal of information. It is suggested that it could be divided among groups, with each group reporting back on what it has discovered to complete the list on page 51. Students could start to speculate on the question: are these experiences likely to influence the men on their return to Australia and more normal life? The point could also be made that these experiences are probably true for all troops who were involved in the war, regardless of which country they fought for or whose side they were on.

ACTIVITY 4

This activity summarises the action that has become associated with the official Australian commemoration of the war.

ACTIVITY 5

In this activity students have the chance to be decision makers. It is based on a real situation, and students should have enough information to make reasoned decisions. It does not matter if they are not accurate, the key thing is that students discuss the principles involved, and can understand why the commander made the decisions he did.

ACTIVITY 6

This activity focuses specifically on treating the wounded and ill. The key element in the Vietnam War was the availability of helicopters to move the wounded from battle to a hospital quickly. Death rates from wounds were greatly reduced in this way.

ACTIVITY 7

Everything has been leading to this activity — learning enough about the war to be able to speak sensitively with veterans. A veteran can be invited along to speak to the class, or students can be asked to contact veterans to interview them. Teachers or students should work through the local RSL or Vietnam veterans’ organisations for help in finding and approaching appropriate people.

4 Interactive CD-ROM and DVD resources

Interactives on the *Australia and the Vietnam War* CD-ROM that are appropriate learning tasks for this unit are:

- **Dress a Paper Doll** to identify different participants in the war (Primary)
- **Write a Letter** describing a combat experience (Primary and Secondary)
- **Explore a Viet Cong Tunnel** (Primary and Secondary)
- **Prepare for Patrol** (Primary and Secondary)
- **Produce a News Report on Long Tan** (Secondary)
- **Explore the Camp at Nui Dat** (Primary and Secondary)

Episode 7 (*The Vietnam War*) of the *Australians at War* documentary series supplied on DVD with this resource, has rich historic film and interviews covering all aspects of the soldiers’ experiences and especially the Battle of Long Tan.
Every one of us has an image of warfare and battle. What is your image of the Vietnam War?

1. Brainstorm your ideas and record them under these headings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weapons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enemy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of fighting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You will be able to test all these in this topic and come back at the end to see if you would add to or change any of these initial ideas.

You might also discuss where your ideas have come from and how accurate they are likely to be for Australians in the Vietnam War.

Now imagine that you are in charge of sending a combat force to another country.

You will set up your own base in an area. There are enemy forces in the area, as well as local civilians who are just trying to live their everyday lives. Some of the enemy are professional soldiers, others operate from within villages — they seem to be ordinary people by day, but by night they help take food, ammunition, information and recruits to the enemy. Sometimes they terrorise villagers and force them to help, but at other times villagers are on the enemy’s side. Much of the area is jungle and much is rice paddies and rubber tree plantations. You have superior weapons and technology, especially communications, artillery and control of the skies. You control the area by day, the enemy controls it by night.

2. What is your aim or aims? You may choose one or several. Explain your choices.

You will be able to test all these ideas in this topic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aim/s</th>
<th>Reason/s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Defeat the enemy in battle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Help the local people live safe lives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Support the local government</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tactic/s</th>
<th>Reason/s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Draw the enemy into large battles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Cut the enemy off from the villages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Sit in the base and wait for the enemy to come</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Go out and patrol the area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Stick to the villages and roads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Operate in the jungle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Other— Explain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In 1966 the Australians established themselves in Phuoc Tuy Province as their main area of operation. They set up a camp at Nui Dat as the base from which fighting forces would operate. Australian patrols set out from here, usually carried by trucks, armoured personnel carriers (APCs) or helicopters to a particular place, from where they started patrolling on foot. The soldiers were rarely sent beyond the reach of artillery support, so several artillery Fire Support Bases (defended outposts from where artillery could support the infantry) were set up to enable the patrolling troops’ area of operations to be increased.

The Australians also created a supply base at the port of Vung Tau. Supplies and equipment would arrive here from Australia or from American supply bases in Vietnam (especially at Long Binh in Bien Hoa) and would be sent by road, inland water or air to Nui Dat.

The enemy were of two main types — local guerrillas (Viet Cong — VC), who operated constantly in the area with the willing or forced support of the villagers; and North Vietnamese Army (NVA) regular troops, who were more likely to be in the area only occasionally and based in a hidden camp while a particular operation was being implemented.

The Australian aim was not to defeat the enemy in major battle, but to gain control of their area (or Tactical Area of Responsibility — TAOR). This could be achieved by cutting off the guerrilla forces from their sources of food, money and recruits in the villages. If the VC were denied food and supplies, they either had to focus on getting new supplies rather than fighting, or they had to withdraw to other, safer areas.

The Australians had three main ways of achieving this: by cordon and search of villages; by search and destroy operations against enemy camps; and by patrolling and ambushing the enemy as they moved through the area. It was rare to have a large-scale battle.

Most operations were at a company level (about 120 men), or a platoon level (about 30 men). Most required stealth, patience, discipline and training. For most of the time on patrol the Australians were not in contact with the enemy — though there was always the possibility that such contact might happen at any time. Most patrols did not even see the enemy. Men might stay out on patrol for up to six weeks, carrying 5–7 days’ food that could be re-supplied as needed by helicopter.

Patrols were not pleasant. The conditions were generally hot, often in pouring rain and mud, with snakes, leeches, little food and barely enough water. Food often had to be eaten cold. Men could not smoke (and many were addicted to nicotine). They had to know how to move safely through thick jungle, mined roads and tracks and open paddy fields, all while carrying heavy loads. They had to know how to treat innocent locals, as well as how
to engage armed enemies. They often had to lay silently through the night in an ambush position, or assault a heavily fortified enemy bunker system. They had to try to distinguish between friendly and hostile local people, as well as avoiding firing on their own comrades in the terror and fog of a firefight. Stress was ever-present.

**Organisation and arrival of the infantry forces**

The basic combat unit in Vietnam was the infantry battalion, supported by artillery and APCs.

The infantry battalion had about 800 men. It was divided into a headquarters section, and four Rifle Companies. The Rifle Companies did the actual fighting. Each company had five officers and 118 men, organised into three rifle platoons (1 officer and 33 men). Each platoon was organised into three sections.

The infantry might also have some engineers with them (for example, to deal with mines or search tunnels). They could call up help from APCs and tanks, artillery, helicopters, and even at times American or Australian bombers and war ships.

What qualities did it take to operate in these conditions? What was it like to be in combat in Vietnam? What happened to the men in these situations? The following pages explore aspects of their experience in more detail.

Look at the following photographs showing aspects of Australian combat activities. Briefly describe what each helps you to understand about the nature of the war.

(You can check your ideas against the official caption for each photograph on page 50.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Photograph</th>
<th>Helps me to realise that ...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Scenes from combat
CAPTIONS:

A  Finger talk signals plan of action. AWM CUN/66/0179/VM
B  Soldiers from 7RAR wait through a tropical downpour on the battalion heli pad to carry out helicopter winching training with tracking dogs, Tiber and Justin. AWM EKN/67/0097/VN
C  Two members of 103 Field Battery, Royal Australian Artillery, firing a 105mm if pack howitzer from a gun pit at 1ATF. AWM EKN/66/0065/VN
D  Four infantrymen rush an injured mate to a waiting helicopter for evacuation for medical treatment at the 1st Australian Field Hospital, Vung Tau. AWM WAR/70/0601/VN
E  One of the Cavalry Regiment’s M108 mobile howitzers that were on loan from the American military to the Australians. AWM P01636.014
F  Searching for mines. AWM CAM/68/0136/VN
G  Australian APCs of 1 APC Squadron. AWM CUN/66/0705B/VN
H  Viet Cong prisoners being loaded into a RAAF Iroquois helicopter of No 9 Squadron, after being captured by soldiers of the 6th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (6RAR). AWM COL/67/0130/VN
I  Members of the 6th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (6RAR) running to a RAAF Iroquois helicopter (also known as a Huey) while they are on patrol in the Nui Dinh Mountains. AWM P02629.028
J  Private Jack Trease of Mirboo North, Vic, pauses briefly during a reconnaissance patrol in Phuoc Tuy Province. AWM FOD/71/0254/VN
K  A RAN Helicopter Flight Vietnam (RANHFV) door gunner attached to the US Army 135th Assault Helicopter Company, at the Bearcat base in Bien Hoa Province, South Vietnam. AWM NAVY19683
L  Members of 1st Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (1RAR), search the clothing of one of a number of captured Viet Cong. AWM SHA/65/0291/VN
M  Briefing by Captain Guy Griffiths (centre), the commanding officer of the Guided Missile Destroyer HMAS Hobart which was off Danang. A Tartar anti-aircraft missile, affixed to its mount, forms the background. AWM NAVY13540
N  The port lookout at his position as HMAS Hobart is closed up for action station. AWM NAVYM0167/05
O  A door gunner of a No 9 Squadron RAAF Iroquois helicopter. AWM VN/66/0047/16

You can learn more about this if you:

• Dress a Paper Doll to identify different participants in the war
• Explore the Camp at Nui Dat
What was combat like for Australian soldiers in Vietnam?

The following sources provide evidence from some individuals about their experiences of combat in Vietnam. Look at these and summarise what you learn about these aspects of the soldiers’ experiences:

- The qualities shown
- Emotions felt
- Variety of combat situations faced
- Dangers
- Attitudes to fighting
- Attitudes to possible injury or death
- What helped them survive
- Effectiveness of their training
- Attitude to the enemy
- How effective they were
- Aspects that might affect them in later life

**SOURCE 1**
Viet Cong history of the war in Phuoc Tuy province

Throughout the year 1970, the Australian tactics of [cordon and search of villages] created an extremely tense situation for us. 245 of our cadres and soldiers were killed. In the villages, 188 of our agents were arrested and put in gaol and 162 young men were forced to join the army. We suffered a very serious lack of food; our cadres and soldiers had to eat leaves gathered in the jungle; only the wounded were allowed a thin rice gruel.

**SOURCE 2** On sentry at night during a patrol

One night I was on picquet in a rubber plantation, half asleep. All of a sudden I could hear something coming through the rubber behind our position. I couldn’t make out what was going on as there seemed to be a big group and they were fairly well spread out. So I picked up the starlight scope [for seeing at night], but I was shaking that much I couldn’t see out of it and I nearly gave myself a black eye trying to look out of it. All it turned out to be was a mob of pigs.

**SOURCE 3** The infantry man’s pack

I was carrying the lightest weight in the platoon and I was carrying about 80 pounds [36 kilograms]. Bruno had about 93 to 100 pounds of ammunition, pack and machine gun. He was so overloaded that if he leant forward and you pushed him, he couldn’t stop moving for 10 or 12 paces. I mean, it was a bit ridiculous really, but those were the weights we were carrying.

**SOURCE 4** Fear

I’ve seen blokes, and been one of them, walking around with wet pants after a contact.

**SOURCE 5** Two episodes from an ambush

A [I was] very excited, adrenalin pumping, anxious that myself and the [machine] gunner were 100 per cent ready for our first combat … [When the firing started I was] calm and collected, remembering the months of training beforehand particularly [the need for] well-aimed shots and counting your shots … I don’t recall any fear at that point … My actions, indeed the whole section’s actions, were under the control of all the training we had received … trying to do what we were taught. I definitely remember taking aimed shots at the [enemy] closest to me … It wasn’t until we had a chance to rest and have a smoke [and] I thought about the shot-up bodies that I felt fear — real fear — and it must have been obvious because, as I was trying to light a cigarette, “Dinger” Bell asked me why I was shaking.

B I knew with [the soldier who had shot the woman] — he was a very quiet guy — that I may have a bit more problem … because he kept away from most of us during the day while we were digging the graves and everything else. I was just watching him. That’s why I hitched up with him that night … and I just thought that [this soldier] was, you know, [feeling] bad … so I pulled him back in to depth with me. He cried and carried on and I hit him to shut him up. He was really worried. He said he was going to pack up and walk out. He was going to leave his rifle and gear and everything else. He started crying, I said: ‘Shut up! You’re going to draw the crabs.’ And he wouldn’t, so I hit him … He stayed there all night. Never went to sleep. Every time I woke up he was just lying there, on his back, looking straight up. I felt rotten about the fact that I did it, but I felt I had no choice.
SOURCE 6 First contact

Then it happened: my moment of truth. I knew I had fired lots of shots in anger before but I didn't see anyone before, only voices and noise coming from the enemy's direction. But this time I could see him trying to crawl away. I didn't want to pull the trigger but I couldn't let him get away. It seemed a lifetime, and then I found out what I was made of. I pulled the trigger and he didn't move anymore.

I felt so sad I thought of my mum and dad. How would they feel if it was me at the other end. All that night I felt sad, scared, but glad I had done my job ...

It wasn't till the welcome home march [in 1987] that a group of us were talking about our experiences, that I finally stopped feeling guilty for what I had done, and if it wasn't for my friends, or should I say brothers, I would still feel guilty now. That [night in Vietnam] was one night I will never forget. It made me appreciate life.

SOURCE 7 The chaos of war

There was so much going on it was incredible ... You just couldn’t keep control of what was going on ... You were yelling to guys who could see and they were too taken up with their jobs. ... You try and shoot — you know, you’ve got to shoot — but you’re so wound up it's incredible.

SOURCE 8 Mateship

Someone to talk to, joke with, laugh at, give you a helping hand if you needed it, back you in a fight, drink with and give you real support. Mateship welded the unit together.

SOURCE 9 Bravery

An APC [armoured personnel carrier] from Headquarters Section was hit by two RPG [Rocket Propelled Grenades] rounds and began to burn. Barry Coe ... jumped off [our APC] and ran over ... Your instinct was to help but your training was to stay put — you know. He jumped off and did what you wanted to do. But he was a corporal. That was the difference. He was a fellow who could do it, you know.

SOURCE 10 Attitude to killing and death

We were young, ‘unblooded’, well trained and never seemed to be worried by the enemy. My main concerns were for the serious consequences a careless action by one of my own section could cause. I think, later on, as the body count of dead mates added up, more caution was exercised.

SOURCE 11 Loss of a mate to 'friendly fire'

I often feel for that poor bugger [who fired the SLR rifle] because it certainly wasn’t his fault. I mean, we would have all done it. I often think of him. I often think I should endeavour to try and contact him. I don’t know what he’s going through. I mean, you just don’t forget that would you?

SOURCE 12 Attitude to the enemy after a mine incident

I hated the enemy then, and God knows what would have happened should I have had some at my mercy.

You can learn more about this if you:
- Write a Letter describing a combat experience
- Explore a Viet Cong Tunnel
- Prepare for Patrol
- Explore the Camp at Nui Dat
On 18 August 1966, D Company, 6th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (6RAR), was patrolling in the area of the Long Tan rubber plantation when, at about 3.15pm, the lead platoon saw a small group of Viet Cong. They fired on the enemy, who dispersed. D Company continued their patrol — and suddenly encountered a very large enemy force.

There was intense fighting as the platoon tried to work its way back to the rest of the company. They did not know that the other platoons were also under heavy fire. About 108 soldiers (including three New Zealanders) were now in battle against an enemy of more than 2000 troops.

The fighting was intense. The plantation, already gloomy, was made darker by a tropical downpour. Men were being killed by rifle and machine gun bullets, mortars and shrapnel from grenades fired into trees to blast splinters into the sheltering soldiers.

The Australians were nearly surrounded, isolated, and running out of ammunition. They radioed for help. A RAAF helicopter braved the intense enemy fire against it to drop ammunition among the troops. Artillery was pouring in only metres ahead of the defenders. A slight error would land shells among them.

Towards the end of the day, after several hours, Australian armoured personnel carriers (APCs) suddenly tore into the attacking enemy, their machine guns firing. The APCs carried relieving troops. The enemy slowly melted away into the dark.

Two Australian wounded now had to endure a terrifying night alone on the battlefield. They could hear the enemy moving among the bodies, checking for wounded friends as well as wounded opponents.

Finally, at first light, Australian troops were able to move forward and search for the two men, get them help and inspect the terrible battlefield. Eighteen Australians and at least 245 enemy were killed and many were wounded.

Look at this painting of a scene during the battle.

1. Describe the sights, sounds, smells and feelings that the artist is suggesting.
2. What qualities did the men show?
3. What made them able to operate so successfully in such a situation?

The Battle of Long Tan is not a typical situation faced by Australians during the Vietnam War, but it has been chosen to represent the war and 18 August is now Vietnam Veterans’ Day. Why do you think it has been chosen as the ‘iconic’ event to represent the Vietnam War? Do you think it is a good choice? Explain your views.
Imagine that a soldier has just been wounded. Look at these photographs showing how the system worked. Provide a caption for each photo and then arrange them in a sequence that shows the steps in the system.

**A**

**B**

**C**

The medical system had to be able to deal with battle casualties in the field and injuries and illness.

The Australian system in Vietnam included these elements:

- hospital with medical and surgical facilities
- Regimental Aid Post for simple illnesses at Nui Dat
- dustoff helicopters to carry wounded from the conflict
- access to American hospitals in Vietnam that had more specialised staff if needed
- medical evacuation flights to Australian hospitals for long-term wounds
I hated doing dustoffs the most. You could never key yourself up; we used to psych ourselves up for a dustoff. The worst dustoff I ever got called out for was for a mine incident. Gunshot wounds were manageable and relatively clean, but mines — the guys were just blown to bits. It was frightening. It was appalling.

I did not come across any patient, sick or wounded, that was not cast in the mould of the Australian soldier that you read about in the First or Second World Wars. In spite of everything, they were generally optimistic and uncomplaining. They accepted their lot and were grateful for anything that was done for them. There were of course the usual pranks as their condition improved. Those patients that were transferred to us from US hospitals were very happy to be with their own kind. I have no doubt that the character we know as the Australian Digger is still with us.

The whole time I was there I didn’t actually see anyone physically die — not one. Our survival rate was quite incredible once we got people into triage.

The support the Diggers gave one another was superb and was very, very touching. The hardest part for them was when they were coming up to medevac time and having to return to Australia. Many of them had lost an arm or leg and while they were a member of what was like a close family they were okay, but when it came time for them to go home they had a lot of problems. It was great to see their friends come down from Nui Dat to give them support and courage and I think the support they got from their visiting friends was as important as what we gave them, if not more. It was very, very important and it gave them a lift.
6. Interviewing veterans

One of the best learning activities possible for the Vietnam War is to talk to veterans. This can be done by inviting a veteran to talk to your class, or by interviewing somebody. We have not provided you with a list of specific questions, but below you will see a number of areas that you might be interested in asking the veteran about. More information about each of these is in this resource, either in print, as film, or as interactive exercises, or all three.

It would help if you know something about each area before you talk to your veteran.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal details</th>
<th>Name, age, rank during the war</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge about the war</td>
<td>Did you know much about it before you went? Where did your information come from? Did you support or oppose Australian involvement? Did you support or oppose conscription?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of service</td>
<td>Force (Army, Navy, Air Force) and if Army – Regular, National Service or Citizens’ Military Force (CMF)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruit Training</td>
<td>Where? When? Experiences? Your opinion of it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corps</td>
<td>Which one? Main job? Where posted? More training?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posted to Vietnam</td>
<td>Did you volunteer to go? Did you have a choice? Attitudes and expectations? Well prepared?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience in Vietnam</td>
<td>When sent? How did you travel there? (eg HMAS Sydney, Qantas flight, some other flight?) Where based? With whom? Main job or role? Typical day?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>To the war? To other allied troops – USA, Vietnamese? To local Vietnamese civilians? Enemy – VC/NLA? To regulars/national servicemen? To officers/men? To protesters in Australia? To posties/unionists? To politicians?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R &amp; R, R &amp; C</td>
<td>How often taken? Where visit?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflections</td>
<td>Highlights/lowlights? What kept you and others going? Difficult?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homecoming</td>
<td>How long were you there? How did you come back? Any formal parade? Reactions on return? — Stress personal knowledge only. How accepted?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After the war</td>
<td>Back into society? RSL /ex-service organisation issues? 1987 Welcome Home important to you?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CAPTIONS FOR ACTIVITY 5, PAGES 54-55:
A Long hours of tending to the medical needs of this wounded Australian soldier await RAAF Nurse Jane Elizabeth Passmore, of Hobart, Tas, as she checks his condition on board a RAAF Hercules transport aircraft en route to Australia from South Vietnam. AWM MAL/66/0004/01
B One of the seven soldiers from 8 Platoon, C Company, 5th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (RAR), injured by shrapnel from a booby-trap grenade. AWM P01353.008
C At the 8th Field Ambulance dustoff pad at Nui Dat, a wounded soldier is unloaded from a RAAF Iroquois chopper which has winched him out of the jungle. This dustoff mission resulted from an enemy contact in which six Australians were killed and 14 wounded on 6 August 1967. AWM VN/67/0104/20
D The theatre sister at the 1st Australian Field Hospital, Lieutenant Yvonne Wemdy of Riverdale, WA, puts a preliminary dressing on minor fragmentation wounds. Minutes before the soldier had been on a dustoff helicopter bringing him from the jungle to the hospital for treatment. AWM COM/69/0477/VN
Reporting and Representing the War

FOCUS QUESTIONS:

What we did on the battlefield in the morning was on our living room tv screens that night.

More than ever before TV showed the terrible human suffering and sacrifice of war — Richard Nixon.

Quotations on the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial

How was the Vietnam War reported to Australians?

What impact did TV reporting have on people?

Sergeant Kevin Thurgar, official army photographer, using a 16mm Bach Auricon sound and film movie camera to film in Vietnam in 1968.

AWM CR0/68/0408VN
Teaching Suggestions

1 Background information

Was Vietnam a TV war?
It is generally accepted that the Vietnam War was the first television war, with people sitting at home and watching death and destruction with their evening meal. The result was that TV helped lose the war for the Americans and their allies.

Is that really true, or is it an example of a ‘false memory’ that has originated because the power of certain images makes it seem that there were also many of them?

An American war
Most of the footage that Australians saw was of American troops. Australia did not have the full-time reporters and cameramen in the field to provide a view of the Australian war, and even if they had been there, Australia’s counter-terrorist style of war was not conducive to spectacular ‘grabs’.

Australia’s war
One Australian, Neil Davis, did have an enormous impact on the image of the war, but he was working for an overseas organisation, and mostly shot the South Vietnamese war.

When footage was received, it was edited in Australia, and in a way that would not cause offence.

Similarly, photographic images of the war came through official Defence channels and they were designed for the ‘home town’ audience and not for gritty realism.

This meant that the emphasis in war reporting was on home front events, and that increasingly meant protests. The protesters came to realise that to be filmed they needed to be provocative. While violent protest alienated many people, it made sure that the war, or rather issues about the war, were constantly in the newspapers and on television news.

Dealing with controversial and confronting representations
The lack of realistic images of the war has helped create a relatively benign image of the war. It is no accident that the iconic image of the war, reproduced on the National Vietnam memorial and on the cover of this resource, is a non-violent and non-confronting one.

How do we deal with representations of the war that are confronting? There are several in this resource. It is for teachers to decide whether they use them or not.

2 Key learning outcomes

By the end of this topic students will be better able to:

- Appreciate the nature of news gathering and presentation during the war
- Decide if the idea of Vietnam as a ‘TV war’ is a myth
- Analyse a series of images as representations of the war
- Decide if confronting aspects should be accommodated in the official image of the war
3 Some suggested classroom approaches

**ACTIVITY 1**  
This activity helps students to understand that their sources of and access to news is very different to that available during the Vietnam War.

**ACTIVITY 2**  
Students will learn more detail here about the understandings they have started to develop from the first activity.

**ACTIVITY 3**  
This is a sensitive activity. It deals with the death of an Australian soldier and the possible misrepresentation of the nature of that death. It is a valuable exercise in exploring the nature of evidence and how we know, **but teachers need to decide if it is appropriate for their particular classes to explore this idea in this way.**

**ACTIVITY 4**  
This also is a valuable but confronting activity. It contains several images of dead soldiers. The activity asks how we should deal with these images and with other brutal realities of war. It requires students to consider both the rights and responsibilities associated with telling Australia’s Vietnam story fully and accurately, but at the same time with respect and understanding.

4 Interactive CD-ROM and DVD resources

Interactives on the *Australia and the Vietnam War* CD-ROM that are appropriate learning tasks for this unit are:

- **Produce a TV Report on Long Tan** (Secondary)
- **Curate an Exhibition** of a controversial aspect of the Australian experience (Secondary)

Some discussion of the popular image of the war is on the DVD containing Episode 7 (*The Vietnam War*) from the *Australians at War* documentary series.
This topic is about how news was presented during the Vietnam War and how images can be created that have an impact on our ideas and attitudes.

Think about how you get your world news today and what sort of news you get. Tick the appropriate boxes for each of the aspects listed in the Today column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Today</th>
<th>Then (Vietnam 1962–1972)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Main source:</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>Radio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TV</td>
<td>Internet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Magazine</td>
<td>Other:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 How often:</td>
<td>Once a day</td>
<td>Several times a day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fewer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 How long does it take to get news to you from each of these?</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>Radio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TV</td>
<td>Internet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>Letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Magazine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Think about how this source gets to you. What are the roles in this of:</td>
<td>Reporter on the spot</td>
<td>People on the spot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Government Officials</td>
<td>Camera operator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Camera operator</td>
<td>Editor at newspaper/TV station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Think about a major event – say, a war. What sort of news do you get?</td>
<td>Uncensored or censored?</td>
<td>Delayed or live stream?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Edited or not edited?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 What type information do you get?</td>
<td>Facts</td>
<td>Opinion/s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interpretation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do you think that you get accurate, honest and reliable news reports? Explain your answer.

Now look at this information about the way print and film news was gathered and distributed during the Vietnam War period and tick the appropriate boxes in the Then column.

You will have seen some similarities, but many differences, between the way you get news and the way it was provided during the Vietnam War. We need to investigate this further.

SOURCE 1
Some characteristics of news gathering in Vietnam

- The reporters were usually not Australian. Australian journalists, if they were in Vietnam, were usually only there for a short period.
- The internet did not exist.
- International telephone lines were few and expensive.
- Film had to be flown to its destination.
- If film were flown to Australia it was edited and a commentary written by people in the Australian newsroom.
- Journalists had to have the permission of local military commanders to be with the troops.
- The Australians were rarely engaged in large and spectacular battles.
- There was no front line and soldiers frequently went days and even weeks without seeing any enemy.
- The Army had a Public Relations film unit.
- Most cameramen were American and shot footage of American action.
How was news about the Vietnam War reported?

Here are two quotations from the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial.

What we did on the battlefield in the morning was on our living room TV screens that night.

More than ever before TV showed the terrible human suffering and sacrifice of war.

Richard Nixon

These quotations were chosen as representing statements that were accepted as true of the Vietnam War.

1. What do you think these statements suggest about how the war was presented to people?
2. If they are true, how might the media and especially TV, have influenced peoples’ attitude to the war?
3. The man who provided more footage of the war than anyone else was Neil Davis, an Australian cameraman who filmed the war largely from the South Vietnamese side. (For a brief biography see http://www.awm.gov.au/people/264.asp.) In a documentary made about him by David Bradbury, Frontline, Davis and some other journalists were interviewed about the way news was created for Australia. Look at these brief synopses of aspects of the interviews and answer the questions that follow.

SOURCE 1 Interview summaries

A. Interview with Neil Davis
Neil Davis as a cameraman correspondent describes his opinion of Visnews’ presentation of his film; hard hitting stories sometimes downplayed in the editing.

B. Interview with Noel Bennell and William Roland Pinwill
Noel Bennell as a journalist with the 0–10 network in Vietnam 1972. The story of two correspondents who would have a picnic lunch at a staging post every day. Opinion on why journalists pride themselves on objectivity and how he did not use television to espouse his anti war opinions. He believes his television station gave equal coverage to both pro and anti war views.

William Pinwell as an ABC journalist. The ABC gave little in the way of directives on how to report the war. He was severely criticised by ABC head office for his reporting of the alleged water torture of a female Viet Cong prisoner by Australian troops. Accused of raising common gossip as fact.

C. Interview with Tim Bowden
Tim Bowden as an ABC journalist in Vietnam. Bowden explains that to report the war you could not afford to be emotionally involved. Bradbury comments that technology could not win the war and the media coverage could not change the minds of the people as well. Bowden attributes this to the sameness of the television coverage. Difficulty in getting actual combat footage. The unreality of television cut people off emotionally from what they were viewing.

D. Interview with Mike Carlton
Mike Carlton as a correspondent for the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) describes his first impressions of South Vietnam in 1966 and 1970; censorship and objectivity within the ABC; effect of TV on public opinion; ABC didn’t interpret the political situation.

E. Interview with Darrell Ford
Darrell Ford as an Australian Army sergeant cameraman in Vietnam describes the difference in covering a war as to any other story; a certain risk in covering stories in Australia but in a war there is uncertainty; excitement of being the only cameraman to capture a good action; helping comrades if needed — not letting the camera be in total control; adrenalin rush of combat and capturing people’s expressions in those situations; how soldiers will not place full trust in a civilian cameraman or journalist but would in a soldier cameraman.
A study of the content of news shown in the US during the Vietnam War has found:

- Most news stories on TV did not show footage of combat.
- Only 3–4% showed any graphic footage.

Oscar Paterson, *The Vietnam Veteran and the Media*, University of Tennessee PhD, 1982

If these figures are true for Australia as well, then the quotations do not represent reality. Why might people have a ‘false memory’ about the nature of TV coverage of the war?

Is the idea of the ‘TV war’ myth or reality? We do not know. You can be an historian and try to find out. Talk to people about their memories of the impact of television and other media on them. Try to ask questions that require the person to be specific in their recollections. You will need to be careful and sensitive in exploring this issue and not challenge people’s integrity if they say things that you do not think are true. Your task is to gather evidence and come to your own conclusion.

How do we represent the war now?

The Australian War Memorial has a collection of more than 10,000 images of the war. Most of these are photographs taken by Defence Public Relations photographers. Most books on Australians and Vietnam include some of these images.

Do they give us an accurate and complete representation of the Australian experience of war? Look at these comments on the collection and answer the questions that follow.

**SOURCE 1** An historian and Vietnam veteran comments

For the most part, the Army succeeded in preventing unfavourable images reaching the media. Official photographs and other published photographs of the war are almost devoid of images of the bodies of the dead or wounded, whether Australian or VC. There seemed to be no similar constraints during World War II, when official photographs often showed the bodies of the dead and wounded. Images of badly wounded Australians being helped along jungle paths seemed to capture a sense of the cost of the national struggle. In Vietnam, the political sensitivities were different. Mindful of domestic political opposition to the war, the Army sought to downplay graphic evidence of the nasty reality of combat. The war, as it appeared in official photographs, was to be bloodless.


1. Why does Hall suggest that there was a deliberate policy of shielding the public from the reality of war?

**SOURCE 2** A discussion of images of the war

The following extracts A–J are from the Australian War Memorial publication *Impressions*, discussing a range of aspects of photographs and paintings from the war.

**A** The [Defence Public Relations] photographs were intended as promotional material rather than factual records of the war. Few formal guidelines were issued to the photographers yet the majority of the images they captured were self-censored, officially vetted or had inherent restrictions imposed by their use in the Defence ‘home town’ program.

The ‘home town’ program was an extensive public relations scheme whereby the Department of Defence sent, solicited and unsolicited, photographs and news stories to the media across Australia, deliberately tailoring the content to have local appeal. It is for this reason that almost all personnel depicted in the photographs are identified by name and rank and their place of civilian residence or origin is given. In this way Defence was able to provide its campaign with an element of ‘local-boy-makes-good’, concentrating on lighter, human interest stories … Informal, chatty captions were included with the photographs.

2. What effect would this have on how the war was represented?

**B** Many of the photographs were taken on the bases used by Australians, and these are imbued with a typically Australian ethos of mateship and camaraderie. Others, taken in cities and towns such as Saigon and Vung Tau, have a deliberate tourist feel to them. A large number of photographs deal with the civil aid programs and show Australian troops dispensing medical and humanitarian aid and gifts to grateful villagers, particularly the elderly, women and children.

Photographs of patrols and operations generally depict Australian troops in heroic, deliberately posed shots of helicopter ‘insertions’ and ‘extractions’, or stoically pressing on through mud or forest. Images of Australian wounded appear, but the injured are always conscious and being given medical attention.

3. Showing the wounded should give negative or realistic messages about the war. How might the particular way the photographs were composed provide positive or reassuring messages instead?
There is only one series of photographs that documents the death of an Australian soldier. These few colour photographs depict a chaplain giving the Last Rites to the dying man, already partially wrapped in the hoochie [small tent] used as a substitute body bag in the field, and several later stages as his body is removed to a helicopter pick-up point, winched aboard and flown away. These images were never released during the war.

Why might this image have not been released during the war?

Do you think it should have been? Explain your reasons.

The enemy is always depicted as defeated. They are shown hands tied, blindfolded, awaiting interrogation. Although now unarmed and looking meek, they are always closely guarded.

What positive messages about the enemy might this style of photograph convey?

Although enemy dead are photographed on many occasions graphic images were never made public at the time of the war. Army Public Relations photographer Sergeant Chris Bellis’ image taken on the morning after a night ambush against Viet Cong at Thua Tich in June 1969 is an example. The contorted body of a Viet Cong wearing a light shirt and shorts, his head haloed by barbed wire, dominates the entire foreground. In the middle distance, with a second Vietnamese body, are [two] Australian soldiers … In the original albums presented to the Australian War Memorial by Defence Public Relations ‘NOT FOR RELEASE’ is written heavily over the small print of this negative.

Why might this image have not been released during the war?

Is it acceptable to see it now?

Should it be in this resource? Explain your ideas.

The subjects of the Department of Defence Public Relations photographs have been carefully chosen, posed and edited. They have been further manipulated through association with the pre-written captions. They use a background of myth and symbol familiar to Australians including mateship, courage, a belief in the rightness of the country’s cause, implied references to the original ANZACs, as well as tourism and travel advertising, to promote political and military ideologies within a broader social context.

Look at the Australian War Memorial photographs in Topics 2 and 3 of this resource. Do you agree with this assessment?
Perhaps the most famous Australian photograph of the Vietnam War is by the Army Public Relations photographer Sergeant Mike Coleridge. Taken on 26 August 1967 at Phuoc Hai it depicts members of 5 Platoon, B Company, 7RAR, beside the road to Dat Do after completing a cordon and search mission. US Army Iroquois helicopters are landing in the dusty road to pick up the Australians and return them to the base at Nui Dat.

Describe the elements in this photograph.
What message does it convey?
Why do you think it has become the ‘iconic’ photograph of the Australian Vietnam War experience?

The status of this photograph as the epitome of Australia’s experience in Vietnam has come about for a number of reasons. It is a well-composed action shot with a close-up group of young Australian men in the foreground, tired but successful after their mission. It shows helicopters, singly the most dominant symbol of the war in a US-influenced public mind. The photograph has been seized by publishers of both fiction and non-fiction and used on endless book covers, in magazines, journals and newspapers across the country. It has become etched into Australia’s consciousness because of its constant reproduction. The image is also non-confronting. There is a safeness about it that almost belies the fact it was taken in a war zone; it could be from any training exercise in Australia. What it ultimately reveals is that Australians have claimed an image that is comfortably familiar in a popular culture influenced by American stereotypes to represent their actions in Vietnam.

Do you agree with these comments?
When this image was used for the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial the American markings on the helicopter were removed. Why do you think this was done?

Ray Beattie was a national serviceman in Vietnam between 1970 and 1971. After the war he studied at the Victorian College of the Arts. The war left an indelible impression on him and has formed a major theme in his work. Although it has not been shown publicily, he is working on a series of postcard-size images, one for every day he spent in Vietnam, that explore his response to the events and people there.

Image for a dead man, 1980, is one of three large paintings from a series by Beattie called Sentimentality kills.

Describe the features of this painting.
What do you think they symbolize?
What is the message of this painting?
In these paintings Beattie expresses his reactions to the personal ramifications of having participated in the Vietnam War. Image for a dead man is a large photorealist still life depicting a wooden chair with an army jacket hung over its back. Painted medals are pinned to the jacket (as is the real ‘Rising sun’ badge from Beattie’s uniform). His identity discs and slouch hat are also depicted hanging on the chair. On the seat is a folded Merchant Navy flag. Behind the chair is a vast expanse of cold grey wall and a disconnected telephone line running along the skirting board at the bottom.

This painting expresses a soldier’s grief at the loss of comrades. The jacket, hat and medal are Beattie’s. The jacket retains the shape of a wearer who is no longer there. Although Beattie survived the war he has stated that every time he heard of a comrade’s death in Vietnam he felt that a small piece of himself died as well. The empty wall behind the chair symbolises the nothingness that is death; the disconnected telephone line the impossibility of communication between the living and the dead. The Merchant Navy flag was a present from the artist’s father who sailed under it during the Second World War; it evokes memories of other casualties in other wars.

This is a particularly poignant painting, full of genuine emotion and sadness, that also has meaning as a memorial for the dead. But it has also provoked strong antipathy from some sections of the Vietnam veteran community; they see the work as disrespectful, claim that the order of display of the painted medals is incorrect, assert that there should not be two Vietnam service medals as shown (Beattie was in fact mistakenly presented with two) and, without realising it is a Red Ensign, object that the flag too is incorrect. But Beattie did not intend to make a formal portrayal of an army uniform. He intended it to be a contemplative, personalised statement about the repercussions of war and his tribute to the dead.


Would you change your answer to Question 16?
There are still controversies about representing the war.

Bob Buick, a Long Tan veteran, has revealed in his book All Guts and No Glory that he killed a mortally wounded Viet Cong soldier.

Does this shock you? Why or why not?
Does it worry you? Why or why not?
Does it influence your image of the Australian war in Vietnam? If so, how? If not, why not?

Look at this news article on criticisms of a recent book, Long Tan and Beyond. Colonel Morrison was an artillery commander at the Battle of Long Tan.

A newspaper report

A retired senior military officer has come under fire over a photograph that mocks an enemy soldier. The photograph, taken by Australian soldiers after the bloody Battle of Long Tan on August 18, 1966, shows the skull of a Vietnamese soldier wearing an Australian army hat … The protests include letters to Australian Defence Force chiefs and the Commonwealth Government.

A second picture in Colonel Mollison’s Long Tan and Beyond has also drawn criticism. It shows the upper torso of a Vietnamese officer killed by an Australian marksman two days before the Battle of Long Tan. Colonel Mollison says he had the corpse dug up and then photographed it for identification and intelligence purposes.

Of the photograph, he said: “It is confronting, but it was meant to be confronting. This book is meant to tell it as it was — the truth and nothing but the truth. These things happened.”

Black humour was a psychological defence mechanism, he said. “It was one way of trying to cope with killing people.”

Some Vietnam veterans insist that Colonel Mollison is damaging Australia’s good reputation for respecting enemy dead.

“It is an affront to every decent soldier who served in Vietnam,” one veteran said.


What do you think? Should writers tell the whole truth about events, or is it an insult to people? Does the context make a difference? Or the audience? Or the degree to which it is placed in an appropriate context? Discuss your ideas.

You can explore these ideas more if you:
• Produce a TV Report on Long Tan
• Curate an Exhibition of a controversial aspect of the Australian experience.
On the Home Front

More than 750,000 men turned twenty during the years of the war – a ballot with marbles spun in a barrel was used to help select those for conscription.

Our family found itself divided over Vietnam.

FOCUS QUESTIONS:

- How did the system of national service work?
- Did people support or oppose it?
- Did people support or oppose the war?
Teaching Suggestions

1 Background information

Attitudes to the war

The quotation about families on the wall of the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial on the first page of this topic suggests a bitter and fierce contest of attitudes towards the Vietnam War.

This is partly true, and true for some time, but it does not reflect the more complex reality over time.

When Australia committed advisers of the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam (AATTV) to South Vietnam in 1962 there was virtually no reaction. Australians were focused more closely on the confrontation that was developing with Indonesia than events in Vietnam.

In April 1965, when Prime Minister Menzies announced that ground combat troops would be sent to Vietnam, every Australian newspaper except one supported the move. Public opinion polls and an election reinforced this mass support.

There was opposition. There were some people whose strongly held religious beliefs led them to oppose most military developments. These were, however, often believed to be the dupes of communist front organisations, whose international disarmament principles supposedly were based on cold war ideology rather than social justice ideas. There was also overt opposition from the pro-communist left.

Opposition to the war did grow, but much of it seemed to come from the new generation of radical university student leaders. They organised occasional lively protests, but much of their energy was directed internally on campus, fighting the university administrations rather than the Government. Their mix of revolutionary slogans, support for the North Vietnamese National Liberation Front (NLF) against Australian troops and increasing level of violence also worried many people. This opposition found its voice in the peaceful moratorium protests of 1970 and to a lesser extent 1971.

A key element that seems to have influenced this group was the sending of conscripts to Vietnam.

Attitudes to conscription

Conscription was introduced in 1964 with a view to having a sufficiently large force to respond to the Indonesian threat. However, once the Government committed combat troops to Vietnam, it was clear that the conscripts would be sent there.

Most people supported conscription throughout the war, but not for conscripts to go to war. The conscription broadened the base of opposition to the war, bringing in new groups such as ‘Save Our Sons’, a middle-class and non-violent collection of people who would not normally have been politically active. There were also many examples of debate and discussion about the issues, as well as the occasional protest. The protests grabbed the headlines, but there were many avenues for people to think about the ideas and values behind the war.

Many Australians did not actively support or oppose the war or conscription.

A city phenomenon?

Opposition to the war came mainly from the cities. It was hard for small town people to find like-minded citizens, but the 1970 moratorium in particular was widespread and included small protest groups in country areas.

2 Key learning outcomes

By the end of this topic students will be better able to:

- Identify a variety of attitudes and values in the war and conscription debates
- Appreciate that attitudes changed over time for many people
- Understand the working of the national service system
- Make a judgement about its fairness at the time
3 Suggested classroom approaches

**ACTIVITY 1**
In this activity students realise that the degree of support of the Australian people towards the war changed over time. Students will need to seek out reasons to explain this.

**ACTIVITY 2**
This activity is designed to help students develop empathy with the times they are studying, and to experience the difference between those who were at risk, and those who were not.

Teachers could tell all students that they are about to turn 20 — and this situation affects them. What will they do?

The teacher can then draw out some numbers between 1 and 31 and see which students have been called up — and whether this affects their answers above.

Students can actually go through a range of possible responses in the interactive exercise on the *Australia and the Vietnam War* CD-ROM.

**ACTIVITY 3**
The main aim of this activity is to help students realise that attitudes changed over time on this issue.

**ACTIVITY 4**
This activity brings out the important fact that attitudes to conscription and the war were mixed but different and that there was a variety of reasons and arguments for people supporting or opposing the Australian involvement. The aim is to have students try to identify broad ‘streams’ of opposition (and to a lesser extent support), so that they do not assume all opponents shared the same attitudes and values.

**ACTIVITY 5**
This activity suggests a simple way for students to draw together a range of disparate information into a form that will help them see the ‘big picture’ that the individual information is creating.

**ACTIVITY 6**
This encourages students to carry out their own research by talking to people from the time. Their individual findings can be shared, and they can discuss what generalisations they can develop from their research about whether the Vietnam War really did split Australian society.

4 Interactive CD-ROM and DVD resources

Interactives on the *Australia and the Vietnam War* CD-ROM that are appropriate learning tasks for this unit are:

- *Decide about National Service* (Secondary)
- *Compile a Photo Album* on protests in Australia (Secondary)

Some images of protest are on the DVD Episode 7 (*The Vietnam War*) from the *Australians at War* documentary series.
Did Australians support the Vietnam War?

In Topic 1 you saw the reaction of people to Prime Minister Menzies' announcement in 1965 that Australia would be actively involved in the Vietnam War. The evidence suggests that there was general agreement with this involvement.

Did that attitude change during the war?

Here are two pieces of evidence. Look at them and make a statement about Australians’ attitudes towards the war during the period 1965 to 1972.

**Source 1** Public opinion polls on attitudes to the war in Vietnam (rounded numbers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poll date</th>
<th>We should continue to fight (%)</th>
<th>Bring back the troops (%)</th>
<th>Undecided (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept 65</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 66</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 67</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 68</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 68</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 69</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 69</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>55</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 69</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 70</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Source 2** Election results

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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal*</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country Party*</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DLP*</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indep</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was clearly a change in opinion by many people during the war. What caused this change? There are two major elements involved: attitudes to the nature of the war; and the issue of national service, or conscription. Look at the following activities to explore this further.

*parties that supported involvement in the war

How did the national service system work?

Imagine that you have been asked to design a system of compulsory national service, also known as conscription.

Who will have to do the service? All men, or only some? What about women?

When? At a certain age? When they leave school?

For how long? Months? Years?

Will you allow any exemptions — such as on medical grounds?

How will you justify and publicise the details?

Discuss these and any other aspects and write down your decisions.

Explain why you think you have created a fair, efficient and effective system.

This was the task that the Australian Government faced in 1964. Look at the details and compare them with your ideas.

Operation
The system operated from November 1964 to December 1972.

Aim
It was designed for a limited purpose — to add 4200 men to the Army twice a year.

Eligibility
Nearly all Australian males had to register in January if they turned 20 in the first half of the year and in July if they did so in the second half of the year.

Exceptions
The exceptions were Aboriginal men and non-British subjects (changed from January 1967) and men in the Army. Registration could be avoided by travelling to New Zealand (no passport needed), or travelling overseas on a British passport.

Evasion
Men who failed to register without good reason could be prosecuted and sentenced to the equivalent of their national service time in a military prison, or after 1968 in a civilian gaol.

Method of selection
Twice a year numbered marbles, each representing two birth dates, were placed in a barrel. The number drawn was determined by demographic estimates of the number of people likely to be available for service in those six months. There were 16 ballots. Those whose birth dates were drawn now had to undergo three examinations — a medical, an interview about their educational and employment skills and a secret security check. Those whose birth dates were not drawn were now exempt from the system, although they could volunteer for national service.

Exemptions
Men could claim exemption or deferment at this stage. Temporary deferments could be given on grounds of exceptional hardship (such as where a man was needed on a family farm), compassion, or to complete educational courses. Men given a temporary deferment had to re-enter the system with a later draft group. Permanent deferment was for men who had married before they had been called up, or who had a serious criminal record, or posed a security risk, or who were members of the part-time Citizens’ Military Force, Navy or Air Force — with their six year part-time commitment.

Exemption was considered on three grounds: physical or mental disability, religious occupation, or conscience. Exemption on conscience meant that the man had to prove to a magistrates’ court that he genuinely opposed (for moral or religious reasons) all forms of military service. It was not enough to oppose a particular war.

Call up
Those men who passed the examinations and were not deferred or exempt were now called up for two years’ full-time national service.

They served under the same pay and conditions as soldiers in the Regular Army, except that soldiers were able to vote at federal elections before they turned 21 (the otherwise legal voting age).

If a man served in Vietnam he was entitled to other additional benefits such as tax-free pay during the overseas service and eligibility for a low-interest war service home loan as a result of that service.
Discuss the main strengths and weaknesses of this system.

Do you think you would have registered if you had been required to?

Here are some statistics about the system.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Registered:</th>
<th>804286</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balloted out:</td>
<td>567238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balloted in:</td>
<td>237048</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Comprising:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exempt</th>
<th>3563</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious occupation</td>
<td>553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical or mental disability</td>
<td>1768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientious objection</td>
<td>1242</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indefinite deferment</th>
<th>35548</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married before call-up</td>
<td>20502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMF</td>
<td>15046</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No longer liable</th>
<th>102134</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Death</td>
<td>916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Forces</td>
<td>2194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fail tests</td>
<td>99010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imprisoned for refusal to obey a call-up notice</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unavailable at 31 December 1972</th>
<th>21876</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deferred</td>
<td>15526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardship</td>
<td>470</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suspected breaches</td>
<td>3890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permission to leave Australia</td>
<td>610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migrants</td>
<td>1380</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Called up and enlisted</th>
<th>63740</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Available for call up</td>
<td>10187</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The chances for various events occurring in this system were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Registrations</th>
<th>Statistical chances of a 20 year old being:</th>
<th>Statistical chances of a man who was balloted in being:</th>
<th>Statistical chances of a conscripted soldier being:</th>
<th>Statistical chances of a conscript in Vietnam being:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>804,286</td>
<td>Balloted in — 29% (1 in 3)</td>
<td>Accepted — 7.9% (1 in 12)</td>
<td>Accepted — 26.9% (1 in 4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Of these, the number balloted in was: 237,048</td>
<td>Of these, the number accepted for service was: 63,740</td>
<td>Of these, the number posted to Vietnam was: 19,450</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Of these, the number posted to Vietnam was: 19,450</td>
<td>Of these, the number wounded in Vietnam was: approximately 1,500</td>
<td>Of these, the number of conscripts killed in Vietnam was: 200</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wounded — 0.2% (1 in 500)</td>
<td>Wounded — 0.6% (1 in 165)</td>
<td>Killed — 0.02% (1 in 5000)</td>
<td>Killed — 0.08% (1 in 1250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Of these, the number wounded in Vietnam was:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Do you think it was fair system? Explain your reasons.
Did Australians support conscription?

There were many protests against conscription. Did most people oppose conscription?

1 Look at this evidence and decide for yourself.

**SOURCE 1** Public opinion polls on conscription (figures are rounded to whole numbers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Favour continuing conscription (%)</th>
<th>Oppose/Against End conscription (%)</th>
<th>Undecided (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 61</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 62</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 63</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 64</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 64</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 65</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 66</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jul 66</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 66</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 67</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 68</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 69</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 69</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 70</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 70</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOURCE 2** Gallup polls on sending conscripts to Vietnam (figures are rounded to whole numbers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Send to Vietnam (%)</th>
<th>Keep in Australia (%)</th>
<th>Undecided (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dec 65</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 66</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 66</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 66</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 66</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 67</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Look back at the statistics on conscription.

2 How many people resisted the system? (Look at numbers in gaol and being investigated.) Does this show support for the system? Discuss your ideas.

3 There were many posters and protests against the national service system. What are the strengths and weaknesses of such posters and protest marches as evidence of people’s attitudes? How can you decide?

4 What do you think the attitude of people was towards conscription during the Vietnam War?
Who supported/opposed the war and why?

Here are four posters from the Vietnam War. If you only had these as evidence of people’s opposition to the war, what could you say about who opposed the war and why?

This is a difficult exercise. Asking the following questions of each poster might help you:

1. Who or what is the key image in the poster?
2. What are the key words?
3. Are there any symbolic elements there? If so, what do they symbolise?
4. Who produced the poster?
5. What is the main idea or argument in the poster?
6. Can you categorise the ideas as any of these: Political, Moral, Religious, Ideological?
7. What is the main message of the poster about the war?

A A reproduction of a picture by No Dung depicting a soldier carrying a Vietnamese flag breaking through a barbed wire tank trap while others, including a woman, follow. The accompanying text advertises World Student Days of Action in November 1968. The poster was issued by the International Union of Students.

B Ron Cobb, US flag set alight by burning Vietnamese corpse, 1967. The corpse and skeleton of a Vietnamese child in a field burning below a US flag which has just caught alight.

AWM ARTV03016
An anti-war poster from 1969 calling for complete withdrawal from Vietnam with United States President Richard Nixon, dressed as an American soldier and carrying a bomb, being kicked out of Vietnam.

AWM ARTV00909

This 1968 poster depicts a line of US soldiers inspecting the laid out bodies of dead Vietnamese children. The accompanying text advertises a rally in Canberra and contains a quote from John Foster Dulles that SEATO’s principle purpose was ‘to provide our president legal authority to intervene in Indochina’.

AWM ARTV03111
Here are some more sources from the time showing attitudes and arguments for and against the war and conscription. Use this guide to help you analyse the documents:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>1 Attitude of the writer:</th>
<th>2 Main reasons:</th>
<th>3 Tone:</th>
<th>4 Focus:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pro-war</td>
<td>Political</td>
<td>Extreme</td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anti-war</td>
<td>Ideological</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pro-conscription</td>
<td>Moral</td>
<td></td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anti-conscription</td>
<td>Humanitarian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is no doubt as to whose side the police are on - they are the bully-boys for those gentlemen who are making millions out of the Vietnam War - the henchmen for U.S. Imperialism and the Australian traitor class which demands domestic peace, tranquillity and subservience. The setting up of demonstration defence groups to resist police attacks is an important part in maintaining the unity and solidarity of the Moratorium. We therefore encourage people to organise themselves.

Smash Conscription:
U.S. Out of Indo-China:
U.S. Out of Australia:
U.S. Bosses Out of Australia:
Smash U.S. Imperialism:
1, 2, 3, 4, the N.L.F. has won the war
5, 6, 7, 8, the U.S. must capitulate.
1, 2, 3, 4, Peoples Army, Peoples War
5, 6, 7, 8, Organise and Smash the State.

One Side’s Right, the Other’s Wrong

What’s the MORATORIUM?

The Moratorium is a series of anti-Vietnam War and anti-conscription protests being organised throughout the country by many interested groups - students; church bodies; workers; community, political and other interested groups who are coordinating to display their opposition to the war.

Such a broad combination of groups has never before united over any issue. All these groups are opposed to the war, or its conduct, but for VARYING REASONS:

1. Because it is totally immoral and inhuman, with the U.S., Australia and allies clearly being the aggressors.
2. Because it is a civil war between Vietnamese into which we should not have intervened.
3. That intervention was once justified, but is no longer worthwhile.
4. The selfish view that the war is costing us too much and is not worth the expense, so we should withdraw for purely financial reasons.
5. That we are supporting the wrong side in the war, and should be aiding the Vietnamese against U.S. aggression.
S.O.D. Says—

‘DEMONSTRATIONS BETTER THAN EVER’

The rising tide of public opinion throughout Australia received further impetus last night.

In Melbourne Mrs. McFingle of the Save Our Daughters Society (S.O.D.’s) said that the protest movement was now entering a new phase. Commenting on the recent wave of demonstrations in all capital cities, she said, “The demonstrations we are now organising will be more spontaneous than ever before. They show clearly that public opinion supports us.”

Mrs. McFingle admitted that draft card burning was creating certain problems. It is only natural, she said, that young men engaged in this sort of activity should get their fingers burnt. “Because our supply of draft cards is nearly exhausted, we have made arrangements with a printing firm to produce unlimited quantities of facsimile draft cards. Now that these difficulties are being overcome, we can confidently expect that draft card burning will become a regular feature of community life.”

A spokesman for the Victorian Action Committee Against National-Service Training (VACANT), agreed that the protest movement was broadening in scope. The spokesman denied any links between his organisation and the Save Our Daughters Society, the Vietnam Week Committee and the Anti-conscription Youth Committee. He said, “The fact that we share the same office is purely accidental. Each organisation is quite independent.”

In Sydney Rev. Pius Bartly, Secretary of the Inter-Church Commission for Understanding and Peace (‘I.C.O.U.P’) said that his committee believed conscription was immoral, and a violation of Christian conscience.

“As soon as our committee can agree on acceptable definitions of morality, Christian, and conscience,” he added, “we will launch an Australia wide petition.”

The FACTS are...

The Moratorium — calling for the immediate withdrawal of all Australian and American troops from Vietnam — will be held on 8th, 9th and 10th May.

It will be accompanied by disruption of traffic and the senselessness associated with past anti-Vietnam demonstrations.

The Communist Party is fully involved in the Moratorium.

Prominent members of the A.L.P. — including many A.L.P. Federal M.H.R.’s and Senators — are also associated with this protest.

When will the A.L.P. wake up and realise that involvement with Communists completely discredits its claim to being the “alternative Government of Australia”?

This is where the DLP stands...

The D.L.P. opposes the Moratorium. We disagree with the immediate withdrawal of Australian and American troops from Vietnam because such action would result in the death of thousands of innocent people.

The D.L.P. opposes this attempt to by-pass the democratic processes by resort to mob demonstrations and occupation of the streets. Such demonstrations, as we have seen, can too easily lead to violence.

It’s up to YOU!!!

If the Moratorium is a success, history will hold YOU responsible for handing over thousands of innocent people to the brutality of Communism.

Can your conscience shrug that off? Or don’t you care about your fellow man?

Authorised by W. Hutchinson, 295 Melton Rd., Northgate

And printed by KEVIN BURNS Pty. Limited, Union St, Moorabbin.

WE DEMAND THE IMMEDIATE, UNCONDITIONAL AND UNILATERAL WITHDRAWAL OF AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES FROM INDOCHINA.

WE DEMAND THE IMMEDIATE ABOLITION OF CONSCRIPTION IN ANY FORM, RECOGNISING IT AS A DIRECT INSTRUMENT OF AUSTRALIA'S INVOLVEMENT IN US MILITARY INTERVENTION IN INDOCHINA.

WE DEMAND THAT THE UNITED STATES, AUSTRALIAN AND OTHER ALLIED GOVERNMENTS WITHDRAW ALL MILITARY, MATERIAL AND POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR THOSE REGIMES OR FORCES SUSTAINED BY THE UNITED STATES IN INDOCHINA.

WE DEMAND THAT AUSTRALIA END ITS PRESENT POLICIES OF MILITARY INTERVENTION IN COUNTRIES OF ASIA AND THE SOUTH-WESTERN PACIFIC AND REFUSE ALL FUTURE INVOLVEMENT IN US OR OTHER AGGRESSION OR INTERVENTION IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF ANY COUNTRY.

WE DEMAND THAT THE US AND ITS ALLIES RECOGNISE THE INDOCHINESE PEOPLES' RIGHT TO NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE, UNITY AND SELF-DETERMINATION.

aima of the third south australian vietnam moratorium campaign

NO SELLOUT IN VIETNAM!

CLOSER THAN WE THINK!

SAIGON
MILES
2,300

DARWIN
MILES
2,000

BRISBANE
MILES
2,300

MELBOURNE

PERTH
Making sense of the period

Looking at events on the home front can seem confusing. But if you organise your information it can help you make sense of it. One way of doing this is to create your own timeline.

Draw up a page like this for the period of Australian involvement in the Vietnam War. Look at the timeline on the *Australia and the Vietnam War* CD-ROM. Select the key events that you think are significant in understanding what was happening.

Place them in the appropriate column. Look at the characterisation of the period, adapted from Peter Edwards, *A Nation At War* — the official history of the Australian home front during the war. Do the events seem to reflect what Edwards says were the characteristics of the period? You may decide that you need to change the characterisations suggested to take account of the information you find. A few examples have been done to help you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Political/Govt/Military Events</th>
<th>Social Reactions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Little protest to early involvement. Protest from the ‘old left’ — traditional anti-war groups. These were usually religious based, or were Communist organisations, or were middle-class liberal people.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td></td>
<td>Conscription announced</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Conscription introduces a new element and broadens the anti-war opposition.</td>
<td>First combat troops to Vietnam</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>The ‘new left’ gets involved. These were more radical and younger, based at universities. Their ideas were revolutionary rather than anti-war. At the same time new moderate elements entered — such as the middle-class women of ‘Save Our Sons’.</td>
<td>First conscripts to Vietnam A second battalion sent to Vietnam</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Australia sends a third battalion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Growing dissent and increasing use of violence by radical groups. This alienates many people who disagree with the war or conscription, but do not identify with the protest methods being used or the radical ideology involved.</td>
<td>Prime Minister Gorton announces a ceiling on troop numbers</td>
<td>Draft Resisters Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td></td>
<td>‘Don’t Register’ campaign</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>The height of moderate protest at the moratoria. Radical groups curb their approach to make sure the mass movement is not alienated.</td>
<td>PM Gorton announces withdrawal of a battalion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>The winding down of the military commitment and talk of withdrawal mean that many people think the object has been achieved. Most protest is by radical groups still pursuing their ideologies.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>The last Moratorium seems fairly forced and has run out of steam.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You can explore these ideas more if you:
- Compile a Photo Album on protests in Australia
The best way of both testing your ideas about the home front and adding to your knowledge, is to talk to people.

Here are some suggested headings to use and some aspects that you might ask people about.

You should share your interviews with others in the class and see if you can develop any generalisations about what it was like in Australia during the Vietnam War period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal details</th>
<th>Name, age, job, where lived</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Knowledge of the war | Did you know much about it?  
Why did Australia join?  
Did you support or oppose Australian involvement? |
| Conscription | Were you eligible?  
Did you have friends who were eligible and called up?  
Did this influence you?  
Support or oppose conscription?  
Support or oppose this form of conscription?  
Support or oppose sending conscripts to the war?  
Resist the process?  
Protest against it? |
| Soldiers | Any personal contacts?  
Attitude to soldiers serving?  
Personally abuse or insult any in any way? |
| War | Did your attitudes change?  
Vote for or against it at elections?  
Did you see United States President Lyndon B Johnson ('LBJ')? |
| Protest | Did you participate in any protests? Why? How? Why not?  
Attitude to protesters?  
Attitude to violence during protests?  
Attitude to those who supported the NLA?  
Present at any of the moratoria? |
| Society | Would you say that society was divided?  
Was your family divided? |
| News | Main source of it?  
Was it of interest to you?  
Did you get much information or news on the war from TV?  
Your recollection of any news/current affairs?  
Was TV the main influence on your attitudes to the war? |
| Now | Would you hold the same ideas now about the war that you held then?  
What is your attitude to the Vietnam veterans now?  
What is your attitude to the war now?  
What is your attitude to those who protested now? |
Nobody’s got 365 days and a wakey to go.

Quotation on the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial

**FOCUS QUESTIONS:**

- What happened in Vietnam after the Australians left?
- How were the veterans received back into Australian society?

Thousands of residents turned out on 13 November 1970 to welcome home troops from 8RAR, the first battalion to be withdrawn from Vietnam without being replaced. Queensland Newspapers
Teaching Suggestions

1 Background information

The ‘wakey’

On their last day in Vietnam, most men crossed out that last, magic word: ‘wakey’ — the day when they woke up to go home.

Veterans returned from their tour of duty in Vietnam sometimes as individuals or in small groups on Qantas flights and sometimes as part of a large group on HMAS Sydney.

The Australian system generally moved combat soldiers as a unit, but this did not always apply to every member of a particular group.

There were always men who joined at a different time, or left at a different time. National servicemen had to be withdrawn before their two years were finished, regardless of where they were. Reinforcements came in at different times and could finish at different times. This meant that when a battalion left after a twelve-month tour, not all its members would leave together as a unit.

How were they greeted?

Most soldiers who write about the war mention the feeling of emptiness and rejection on their return to Australia. Most write about late night plane arrivals to an empty airport. Many write about the sense of fulfilment of the public acknowledgement they finally received at the 1987 Welcome Home Parade.

Yet the facts sometimes tell a different story. Every one of the battalions had a march through its home city on return — that is 16 marches all told — and each one was welcomed by cheering and applauding crowds. There was only one protest — a woman who dashed out of a crowd and smeared paint over one soldier.

Separation

On return to Australia all service personnel went on leave. The group that they had lived with for the last twelve months was suddenly gone. Many national servicemen then were discharged without seeing their mates again. Regular soldiers went back to their units, so remained in contact with the recent past.

Adjustment to a new life

Back in civilian life, the men, especially those in country areas, may have had nobody who had shared their experiences — and some of these experiences were to haunt them for years and perhaps forever. They were alone and suddenly cut adrift. Many readjusted straight away and got on with their new lives; the reminiscence books tell us that many struggled to do so — and failed. They found that people did not understand them; they had grown apart from their old mates; they did not seem to be able to find a niche in the Anzac tradition that is so important in Australian identity. They and their families suffered.

We do not know what proportion of veterans made an easy adjustment back to society, or what proportion is suffering still, so we cannot generalise about the issue. But we can empathise with and understand the feelings of those who did not fare well on their return.

2 Key learning outcomes

By the end of this topic students will be better able to:

- Empathise with the veterans’ experiences of returning to Australia
- Appreciate the reasons why some had difficulties after Vietnam
- Devise strategies for dealing with some problems of memory as historical evidence
Suggested classroom approaches

**ACTIVITY 1**
This activity is a simple one to help students understand the ending of the war.

**ACTIVITY 2**
This activity raises issues that are further dealt with in Topics 7 and 8, but it focuses on one important issue: the feeling of rejection that many veterans felt and some still feel. This is explored further and in a positive way in Topic 8 and teachers may choose to bring Activity 2 forward from Topic 8 to here.

**ACTIVITY 3**
Students are asked to critically analyse memory as evidence. Students must not discount people’s memories, or treat them with disrespect, but the issue is a legitimate one for students to address in an analytical but also empathetic way.

**ACTIVITY 4**
The issue of people’s attitudes to involvement in the war is still a sensitive and strongly-felt one for many people. Students need to keep this in mind when they ask civilians and soldiers about it.

Interactive CD-ROM and DVD resources

Interactives on the *Australia and the Vietnam War* CD-ROM that are appropriate learning tasks for this unit are:
- Write a Diary Entry about coming home (Primary and Secondary)
- Analyse a Vietnam War Roll of Honour (Secondary)

Some images of the ending of the war are on the DVD Episode 7 (*The Vietnam War*) from the *Australians at War* documentary series.
In December 1971 the last Australian combat soldiers left Vietnam. Many Australians believed that they had gained control of the province from the Viet Cong and that the local people were able to live better lives than before their arrival.

The bases at Nui Dat and Vung Tau were handed over to the South Vietnamese Army, as part of the ‘Vietnamisation’ strategy of withdrawal.

In 1975 the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces launched their final assault on Saigon. Part of the advance and attack saw the NVA and Viet Cong troops take Ba Ria, the provincial capital of Phuoc Tuy.

The closing days of the war saw Australia’s last military involvement with an Air Force airlift of aid supplies into South Vietnam and evacuation of the Australian embassy staff and Vietnamese war orphans.

The war was over. The North Vietnamese and Viet Cong had won.

A memorial that had been built at Vung Tau to commemorate the Australians’ efforts was destroyed.

One legacy that remained was the effects on people of the use of Agent Orange as a defoliant. There had been an extensive use of this defoliant [a chemical to kill vegetation] by the Americans in many parts of Vietnam and to some extent in Phuoc Tuy by Australians. Look at this recent report.

SOURCE 1 The effects of Agent Orange in Vietnam

Nguyen Thi Kim Vang had never seen a child with a birth deformity before the American War [the description given by the Vietnamese to what Australians call the Vietnam War]. Thirty years later she lives with a constant screaming reminder.

Of her children, three died in the first few months, two are normal and the sixth still cannot recognise her despite the fact Mrs Vang has nursed, changed her nappies and fed her every day for 25 years. Her husband spent years in the jungle fighting for the Viet Cong and was exposed to defoliants sprayed by US forces.

Her daughter, Duong Thi Thu Huong, now 25, was born apparently normal but a week later developed marks on her skin. Today she is a twisted shell, with the body weight of a 10-year-old, twitching in her dilapidated wheelchair in the simple family home in Vung Tau, a small coastal town two hours south of Ho Chi Minh City [Saigon] …

In Vietnam, it's impossible to ignore Agent Orange; its casualties are everywhere. An estimated four million Vietnamese were exposed to Agent Orange, a chemical mixture of two synthetic herbicides, 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T, which was used to strip foliage from the jungle, depriving the Viet Cong guerillas of shelter and food. It contains dioxin, which does not dissolve in water, is thought to have contaminated the water supply and entered the food chain through the soil.

Between 1961 and 1971 the US sprayed 80 million litres of herbicides over southern Vietnam.

In the US, the government has found ways to look after its own casualties without admitting guilt, but the Vietnamese get very little airplay and have received no compensation.

The Vietnamese Government wants to change that. In March last year it lost a lawsuit against 37 chemical companies that provided the US government with Agent Orange …

Undaunted by the loss, the Vietnamese Government has launched an appeal …

The clinching evidence in the appeal will be new research from the Military Medical Institute on 50,000 people, said Professor Nguyen Trong Nhan, deputy chairman of the Vietnam Association for Victims of Agent Orange/dioxin.

He told the state-owned Family and Society newspaper “it shows people who live in AO/dioxin-affected areas will have up to 2.95 per cent and 2.69 per cent of their children and grandchildren respectively deformed. The rates in other areas are 0.74 to 0.82 per cent.” …

In Vung Tau, the provincial chapter of the Vietnam Association for Victims of Agent Orange/dioxin says it has 3390 registered cases ranging from severe to mild, affecting first generation to third.

Connie Levett, Sydney Morning Herald, 28 August 2006

1 Do you agree that the makers of the chemicals used in the war ought to pay reparation for the damages done?

2 Is the use of the defoliant any different from bombs or bullets? Explain your views.

3 Many Australian veterans are involved in building programs in Phuoc Tuy. Why might they feel the need to do this?
Would you visit Vietnam today?

Many veterans are returning to Vietnam to see what has changed and to ‘lay the ghosts to rest’.

Here is one account of that:

**Visiting Vietnam Today**  
*(Written by Gary McKay)*

For veterans, returning to Vietnam can be an emotional experience. For some it will finally put to rest the feelings they’ve had or the fears they want to face. In most cases they want to see the country now that it’s at peace …

Bob Hansford was an airframe fitter with 161 Recce Flight at Nui Dat and wanted to put some memories — or, as he called them, ‘ghosts’ — to bed. His trip put him in a reflective state of mind: **Returning to Nui Dat and other areas where I served, where everyone strived so hard to achieve the best as soldiers/tradesmen, I found that almost every trace of our occupation had gone. It just shows how insignificant human beings really are in the greater plan… and was it all really worth it in the end?**

Steve Campling was a rifleman with the 6th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment, in 1969 and wanted to see Vietnam as it is today. He was not disappointed: **This trip made me confront my experience in Vietnam. I feel more at peace with myself now that I can see this country striving ahead, quite united and devoid of war. I would recommend that any Vietnam veteran return. It was amazing to experience the lack of animosity toward us. To return to this country so plagued by war for so long and to finally see them at peace would have to quell any veteran’s doubts and fears …**

Vietnam is a land of constant change and it seems that only religious buildings and French colonial-era structures have withstood the ravages of progress. Most other buildings have been remodeled, rebuilt, refurbished or, in some cases, demolished. Returning veterans need to be aware that what they remember probably won’t be there now. For example, the two fire support bases, Balmoral and Coral, are now also covered with rubber trees.

But don’t be put off by this situation: the real thrill of visiting the battle sites is simply ‘being there’. The heat and humidity and the smell of the bush haven’t changed. Be prepared for goosebumps and various feelings that could be disquieting in some ways — but beautiful in others.


Imagine that you have been asked to organise a tour to Vietnam. It is not necessarily for veterans, but it may be for their children and grandchildren, to give them a better knowledge and understanding of how the place has changed.

Organise an illustrated brochure for that trip, using material on modern Vietnam from websites and travel guides.

In your tour you could include:

- places that were significant to Australians — mainly Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City), Vung Tau, Nui Dat and surrounding areas any commemorative sites where memorials exist — such as at Long Tan
- any museums that will tell you about the war and how it is represented by the Vietnamese
- a description of the main changes that veterans would see between Vietnam then and Vietnam now
- a description of scenes that would seem unchanged — such as rural scenes of people working the land
- how to get there — details of flights and costs
- ‘cultural tips’ — a list of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour that visitors should observe in that society
- accommodation and itinerary suggestions
- other aspects that you think will be helpful and relevant.

You will find material at travel agents, in travel books such as the Lonely Planet guides, on tourist websites and on official country websites. Gary McKay’s book *Australia’s Battlefields In Viet Nam – A Traveller’s Guide* (http://www.garymckay.com.au/products.htm) is an excellent resource for this task.
How did soldiers respond to their homecoming?

Soldiers had different reactions on their return.

Look at these extracts from interviews with veterans and list the range of reactions that you see there.

A. Barry Roe

I remember landing at Melbourne and it hit me that I was home when I came out of the plane and saw my mum and dad and my sister and a couple of mates. They had a big sign up: ‘Welcome home Barry’. I came down the walkway and put my feet on the ground and I thought, ‘Well beauty, I’m home’. I walked across the tarmac and came inside Essendon airport and I think I gave my mother a kiss and I think I shook hands with my old man. I remember him saying, ‘Come on, we’ll jump in the car and we’ll go home now’. It sounded funny, ‘jump in the car’. I couldn’t kind of get it through my head that I was home and I was safe and all I had to do was get in a car and drive home.

I remember driving down Mt Alexander Road in Moonee Ponds and I thought, ‘… this isn’t happening this is not happening,’ because eighteen or nineteen hours ago I was in Vietnam. It still didn’t click.

We got home and there was a big party organised and I still couldn’t believe it. There were uncles and aunts there, I just got bombed out of my brain and stayed that way for three or four weeks.

B. Michael Scrase

One minute I was in Vietnam and the next minute I was home, and I was totally lost. Cars backfiring scared ... you, you were on edge the whole time for weeks afterwards. There was no debriefing, no time to melt back in. I know my mum and dad found it very hard to handle me. In fact, they told me quite plainly that I wasn’t the same person any more. I was prone to get violent, punch walls, get into rages very quickly. I’ve never slept right since the day I came home.

C. Lachlan Irvine

Arrived at Sydney airport, met the family, went home, spent the next couple of weeks going around seeing old friends, having parties. At this stage I was twenty years old and my old school friends and people that I’d known before Vietnam just seemed like kids, which of course they were and which of course I should have been. But it was as if we were living in different worlds.

D. Bob Pride

I suppose I had this idea of coming home to a brass band ticker-tape procession and women falling at your feet and coming up and shaking your hand and all that sort of stuff the way it was for the Anzacs and the Second World War guys.

I think we landed at Sydney airport about ten or eleven o’clock at night, went through customs, and got our pay. When the doors opened up there were these people waving placards and someone was holding up a page out of a newspaper about women and children being killed.

E. John Skinner

What was left of the battalion were lined up on the deck of the HMAS Sydney, looking spick and span with polished boots, all ready to go and do this march through Sydney, and all of us nervous with excitement waiting to meet our families. I remember Colin Kahn, the battalion commander. He marched out, very brusque, like on the parade ground and he looked around at us and said, ‘For twelve months you’ve been carrying this pack on your back and you’re all bent and stooped and you’re weary, but today you’re walking through this town and I want you to throw that pack off your back and march because you are the Tiger Battalion’. It was, I guess, you’d call it gung-ho stuff now, but it made us all feel good and proud.

We spent about two hours with our families and then we marched through Sydney. I felt ten feet tall, I really felt good. They had ticker-tape and there were people in the street, but what I didn’t realise was that most people were only curious. They weren’t cheering us home. They were just lined up to see something.
Here is a range of possible reasons to help understand this. Discuss each and explain how it might have been a contributing factor to the sense of alienation and dislocation that some felt.

**Possible factors and how these might influence the impact on the individual.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regular soldier or national servicemen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age — Many who were discharged were now 22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where they lived — City or country</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whether had a job or not</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude of family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes and experiences of old friends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of war experienced</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other possible factors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Service in Vietnam was an important part in the lives of many men and women. How do they feel about that service now?

Look at these comments by a number of veterans and answer the questions that follow.

A. Ron West
Even though tinged with sadness at the loss of some good mates and soldiers, I would not have wanted to miss it. I feel as though I proved to myself, as a Regular infantryman, that I was capable of performing to the best of my ability the tasks that I had been trained to perform. [For] some results I would have preferred a better outcome. [Nevertheless] today I am proud to be a Vietnam veteran.

B. Bob Lubcke
8RAR done well in Vietnam and all the guys served with her can be very proud indeed. I know I am. If I had life over again I would do exactly the same again. It was an honour to be a soldier in the Australian Army.

C. Allan Handley
There is not one day goes by that I don’t give a thought to Vietnam and the guys who got killed. I try to forget, but I can’t. First, I felt guilty about leaving early. I’ve never gotten over that. Second, not being accepted when we returned home. I felt guilty about killing people. It will last forever.

D. Pam Barlow
Australia’s involvement was not worth it. Not in terms of loss of life, maiming of bodies, not to mention the psychological scarring that will be, and is, a long legacy. Man’s inhumanity to man. I am sure the same question has been asked of many before me. Was it worth it? No. The Australian soldier in Viet Nam showed great courage and acceptance. To the people of Australia I would say, if only you had witnessed the courage of these young men, in battle and in death, there would have been no need for conflict concerning conscription. They were proud young men, I know, I was there. That is probably a bit subjective, but that is the way I saw it then, and the way I see it now.

E. Rod Curtis
I learned a lot about myself and about my own personal strengths and weaknesses and I think I came to terms with those. I learnt a lot about mateship and I became more tolerant and I learnt a lot about the Australian soldier and what he is prepared to do and what he will fight for if he believes in it. The most important thing to me while I was in Viet Nam was probably mateship in the battalion … Was our involvement worth it? As a soldier and officer in the Australian Army and setting aside the political restrictions that we operated under, I think the answer is yes. I think the Australian soldier did his job professionally and very well and there is no question in my mind that if you isolate Phuoc Tuy Province, there is no doubt that the Australians won the battle and they clearly demonstrated militarily that they did it very well indeed.

F. Bruce Davies
When I look back on Australia’s involvement in South Viet Nam, where we lost 519 dead, it was not worth it. But that is in hindsight with 20/20 vision … The Australian involvement with South Viet Nam, if you want to be crude about it, wasn’t really worth a damn at all. I know from reading other books and listening to other interviewers that Australia really doesn’t rate a mention in the history of the war.

1. What different elements do these veterans take into account in making their assessment? For example one is the military outcome. What others can you see?

2. Are there any other factors not mentioned that you think are relevant in making such an assessment?

You can understand this more if you write a diary entry about coming home.

After The War

I don’t seem to have many friends since I came home.

If you weren’t there then you can’t understand.

A quotation on the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial

FOCUS QUESTIONS:

➢ What has happened to Australian veterans since the war?
➢ What has been the experience of Vietnamese refugees to Australia?

Lance Corporal Kevin Sloan, returns home from South Vietnam in 1971 where he served with 7th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (7RAR). He hugs his sister Anne, 15 (left), and girlfriend Maryann Lee, 19, of Mount Isa, Qld. Waiting their turn to greet Kevin are Mary, 19, Brian, 16, and Mrs Sloan.

AWM PEA/71/0099/EC
# Teaching Suggestions

## 1 Background information

### Focus of the topic

This topic looks at two long-term effects of the Vietnam War on Australia — the impact on the veterans and the coming of Vietnamese refugee immigrants.

### Escape

After the fall of Saigon in 1975 those who had supported and worked with the Australians and other allies in Vietnam were now in trouble. Many were sent to ‘re-education’ camps and were discriminated against. Some were killed, others were exiled.

Many tried to escape by sea. They paid people, boarded boats with virtually no possessions and set to sea in unseaworthy craft. They were attacked by pirates — robbery, rape and murder were common.

### Refugee camps

Refugees who did survive had to stay in primitive camps in Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, Hong Kong and Indonesia.

The plight of the boat people now became an international humanitarian crisis. Several countries agreed to resettle as many as possible of the refugees, and agreed to quotas — the United States of America (823 000), Australia and Canada (137 000 each), France (96 000), and Germany and the United Kingdom (19 000 each).

### The myth of ‘boat people’

Some came directly to Australia by boat. We refer now to the ‘boat people’ refugees from Vietnam — in fact only a few boatloads arrived directly, most were selected from the refugee camps and flown to Australia. Before 1975 there were approximately 700 Vietnam-born people in Australia. Fifty-six boats from Vietnam containing a total of about 2100 people reached Australia directly, mostly at Darwin. The first arrived in April 1976 and the last in August 1981. Most of the Vietnamese refugee resettlement between 1975 and 1985 was by air from the refugee camps in Asia, and was then followed by family reunion.

By 1981, 43 400 Vietnamese had been resettled in Australia. By 1991 there were 124 800 Vietnam-born in Australia and in the 2001 census, 154 000 people declared themselves as Vietnam-born.

### Vietnam veterans

What of the Vietnam veterans?

As with all wars, many, perhaps a majority of veterans, were able to settle back into civilian life.

However, some have suffered. A 2006 study of the mortality (death) and morbidity (illness) rates among veterans has shown that there are definite statistical connections between Vietnam service and increased health problems in veterans as a group.

### PTSD

Mary Vietnam veterans have suffered from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) — and this has also involved hardship for their families.

### Agent Orange

More controversially, many Vietnam veterans believed that they were suffering from illness caused by Agent Orange — a cocktail of dioxin-based chemicals that are known to cause some cancers, and suspected of causing more illnesses, including some possible genetic problems.

The Vietnam Veterans’ Association of Australia (VVAA) took up their cause and succeeded in having a Royal Commission investigate the claim. In 1984 the Royal Commission reported that there was no evidence to show that Vietnam veterans were suffering more illness and deformities caused by Agent Orange than anyone else in the community. There were terrible individual stories of harm and apparent genetic disorders passed on to children, but these were no more statistically common than among others. The VVAA did not accept this finding and still challenges it as biased and inaccurate.

Veterans now receive medical or other support from the Department of Veterans’ Affairs (DVA) for PTSD, most cancers and other illnesses — whether they can be shown to be caused by Agent Orange or not.
Support from DVA and ex-service organisations

As with all wars, the nation provides support to veterans for their war-related problems through a government agency – the Department of Veterans’ Affairs. Many veterans also get great support and comradeship from their own organisations, which include the Vietnam Veterans’ Association of Australia and the Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia, among others.

2 Key learning outcomes

By the end of this topic students will be better able to:

- Know about a range of health issues for Australian veterans of the Vietnam War
- Be aware of and empathise with the problems facing those veterans whose health has suffered as a result of the war
- Appreciate the nature of Vietnamese migration to Australia after the war

3 Suggested classroom approaches

**ACTIVITY 1**

This activity looks at a range of key statements about the current situation with the health and care of Australia’s Vietnam War veterans. The aim is to provide a simple explanation of some key points so that students will be able to understand the occasional news item and controversy that are reported in the media.

**ACTIVITY 2**

This provides a basic outline of some of the experiences faced by Vietnamese refugees coming to Australia and provides a way of exploring further their experiences since their arrival. It is suggested that teachers might invite Vietnamese people to talk to students in the classroom about their experiences, or that students might interview Vietnamese ‘veterans’, if that is appropriate. One activity could be for students to make their own small suitcase (like Cuc Lam’s) and have to pack it for their refugee ‘escape’.

4 Interactive CD-ROM and DVD resources

Interactives on the *Australia and the Vietnam War* CD-ROM that are appropriate learning tasks for this unit are:

- *Curate an Exhibition* of the experience of Vietnamese refugees to Australia. (Secondary)
What is the state of the health of Australia’s Vietnam War veterans?

This topic is different to all the others in this resource. It does not ask you to use evidence to develop your own answers to certain questions. Instead, it seeks to provide you with a way of understanding the current situation with the health of Vietnam veterans and to have a sufficient understanding to be able to follow items that appear in the news media.

A quotation on the wall of the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial in Canberra says:

*If you weren’t there then you can’t understand.*

That may be true. But there were many people who were there who can understand, who do understand and who are helping those who are suffering as a result of their service.

**STATEMENT 1**

> Of the nearly 60,000 military personnel, men and women, who served in Vietnam 49,500 were alive at June 2005.

> Many Vietnam veterans are living normal, healthy, productive lives, and being good family members and citizens.

> Vietnam veterans overall have a 6% lower mortality [death] rate than the Australian male population.

> About half of all Vietnam veterans are receiving some form of government medical or other support, and about half are totally independent of any form of government support.

**Comments / Issues**

1. The men selected for military service underwent many medical tests. They passed, however, many of their peers failed. Would you expect that this group should have lower mortality (death) and morbidity (illness) rates than their non-military peers? Discuss this idea.

**STATEMENT 2**

> Some veterans were physically injured at the time. They may have been permanent, or temporary but causing problems again now.

> These men and women are given all necessary medical and hospital care through the Department of Veterans’ Affairs.

**Comments / Issues**

2. Many veterans speak highly of the quality of the medical and hospital care that they receive from the nation through the medical and health benefits system administered by the Department of Veterans’ Affairs. Why do you think the nation accepts a special obligation of care for its war veterans?

**STATEMENT 3**

> Some veterans were psychologically damaged by the war. This damage may not have shown itself immediately, indeed it may not have appeared for many years; but it is real, and it is related to the person’s war experience. This is often called Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

> The Government accepts responsibility for the care and treatment of all veterans suffering PTSD.
The Department of Veterans’ Affairs defines military conflict trauma in this way:

*For military personnel* a trauma may relate directly to combat or peacekeeping duties or being in a war or peacekeeping zone. Even though military people are trained for the intensity of these duties, the training may not prepare people for the emotional impact of events.

*Traumatic events may overwhelm a person immediately.* In some cases, however, a person may handle the situation at the time, but feelings about the event can hit months or years later. Sometimes, these feelings occur again and again over time.

*They do not always affect everyone in the same way.* An event which traumatises one person, can be less significant for another and have no long term effects. Individual personalities and the circumstances surrounding the event affect response. The meaning of these experiences can be different for each individual.

A person’s other life experiences can contribute to how people handle traumatic events.

Traumatic reactions to combat have been documented since the ancient Greeks. During World War I they were called ‘shell shock’. In World War II some common terms included ‘combat neurosis’ or ‘combat fatigue’.

DVA Fact Sheet: PTSD General Information

3. Look back at the evidence in Topic 3 of the resource and discuss any evidence you find there of traumatic events that might have led to PTSD in some veterans in later life.

Here is a table showing the symptoms and how these symptoms might appear in a veteran’s life:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom Description</th>
<th>Symptom Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recurring memories of the traumatic event which you can’t seem to get out of your mind.</td>
<td>INTRUSIVE THOUGHTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recurring dreams of the trauma.</td>
<td>BAD DREAMS, NIGHTMARES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling that the traumatic event was happening again (hallucinations, flashbacks).</td>
<td>RELIVING THE TRAUMA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things or events act as triggers which remind you or resemble your traumatic event.</td>
<td>FLASHBACKS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These triggers or reminders make you feel nervous tense, generate panic attacks.</td>
<td>PANIC ATTACKS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purposely avoiding thoughts, feelings or conversations about trauma.</td>
<td>WITHDRAWN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliberately avoiding activities, places and situations about the trauma.</td>
<td>PHOBIAS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When trying to recall the traumatic event you are unable to recall or remember certain things or important aspects that had happened.</td>
<td>MEMORY LOSS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Losing interest in people, things and activities (family, friends and hobbies) which were important to you prior to the traumatic event.</td>
<td>LACK OF MOTIVATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling more emotionally estranged, separated or feeling cut off from others.</td>
<td>ALIENATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling a markedly reduced ability to feel emotions, especially those associated with intimacy, tenderness and sexuality.</td>
<td>LACKING EMOTIONS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty falling or staying asleep.</td>
<td>POOR SLEEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiencing irritability or outbursts of anger.</td>
<td>RAGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty concentrating on tasks or completing tasks.</td>
<td>POOR CONCENTRATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling overtly alert or watchful when you don’t need to be.</td>
<td>EVER WATCHFUL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having strong startle reactions.</td>
<td>EDGY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worrying about coping with everyday situations.</td>
<td>LACK OF CONFIDENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty keeping a regular job.</td>
<td>WORK DIFFICULTIES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some veterans are critical of the process for being accepted by the Department of Veterans’ Affairs as suffering PTSD.

Normie Rowe was a high-profile rock star when he was conscripted in 1968. He recently found himself suffering from PTSD. Look at this account given on ABC TV’s 7.30 Report:

Veteran friends grabbed me and said ‘We know what’s happening.’ And they took me to my doctor and got a referral and put me into a psychiatric hospital, and it took me 15 weeks in that hospital to get a handle on what was going on in my head … I have post traumatic stress disorder. It’s going to be there for the rest of my life. The best I can hope for is some strategies to deal with it.

LISA WHITEHEAD

After his diagnosis of PTSD, Normie Rowe says the process of approving his claim for entitlements was dragged out for 18 months by the Department of Veterans’ Affairs.

NORMIE ROWE

My personal experience is that I was told, because I’m in the public eye, I can’t possibly have post traumatic stress disorder. Well, that proved to me that this man who was — whose job it was to look after … my case, didn’t have any idea about what post traumatic stress disorder was. It’s like their job is to actually put a wall up and say ‘Look, whatever you say, it’s a rort.’

NORMIE ROWE

In many cases, I have to really fight it all the way, and that means going through the appeal system, which is very stressful for veterans, and the tragic thing about the whole thing is that, in the end, the veterans usually win the argument.

TIM McCOMBE, PRESIDENT, VIETNAM VETERANS FEDERATION


Do you think it reasonable for a government department to question veterans in order to establish some connection between their health and a war-related cause? Explain your views.

You can find more information about PTSD at:
http://www.psychologytoday.com/conditions/ptsd.html
http://www.healthminister.gov.au/topics/Post_Traumatic_Stress

Vietnam veterans have a 15% higher overall cancer rate than the general Australian population. With some individual forms of cancer they have a greater rate, but with others they have a lower rate than the general population.

The veterans had higher standards of health when they were younger than the general population. Does this suggest that their Vietnam service must have contributed to the higher rate of some medical problems now? Can you think of any other reasons that might explain this result? (For example, from pre- or post-service activities?)
The Vietnam Veterans’ Association of Australia claims that many illnesses, including many of those described as PTSD, are in fact caused by toxic dioxins in chemicals sprayed to defoliate areas of Vietnam. A Royal Commission report in 1984 did not find a connection between Agent Orange and cancers. The Department of Veterans’ Affairs now accepts that studies have established a connection with some cancers, but not all. However, they provide medical and hospital support for veterans with any cancers.

**Comments / Issues**

6. The issue of Agent Orange is a complex and controversial one. Wikipedia describes Agent Orange in this way:

Agent Orange was the nickname given to a powerful herbicide and defoliant used by the US military in its Herbicidal Warfare program during the Vietnam War. Agent Orange was used from 1961 to 1971, and was by far the most used of the so-called “rainbow herbicides” used during the program. Agent Orange (as well as Agents Purple, Pink, Blue, White, and Green) contained dioxins which are known to have caused harm to the health of those exposed during the Vietnam War. Studies of populations highly exposed to dioxin indicate increased risk of various types of cancer and genetic mistakes; the effect of long term low level exposure has not been established. Since the 1980s, several lawsuits have been filed against the companies who produced Agent Orange, among them being Dow Chemical and Monsanto. US veterans obtained $180 million in compensation in 1984, while Australian, Canadian and New Zealand veterans also obtained compensation in an out-of-court settlement the same year.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agent_Orange

The areas where Australians served were undoubtedly sprayed with Agent Orange.

Vietnam. 1968. In-flight view of a spray boom and twin M60 general purpose machine gun (GPMG) mount fitted to a UH-1B helicopter of No 9 Squadron RAAF. In about August 1968 and January 1969, Captain John Cecil Rhodes, 1st Field Hygiene Company, Australian Army Medical Corps (AAMC), conducted crop destruction and defoliation operations on the Nui Dat perimeter and in the Thuia Tic area, where a mixture of Agent Orange, Agent Blue and water were sprayed over corn and maize crops. The missions were carried out with RAAF helicopters with four-man crews.

7. Cancers may take years to develop. Scientific studies are being carried out all the time and new connections are being made between dioxins and health problems. There is no doubt that most Australians in Vietnam would have had contact with Agent Orange. Do you think that the policy of the Department of Veterans’ Affairs to accept all cancer claims, but not necessarily to agree that they are caused by Agent Orange, is a fair and appropriate one? Explain your views.

**STATEMENT 6**

National servicemen who served in Vietnam have a 19% lower death rate than the general community. However, they have a 23% higher death rate than their national serviceman peers who did not go to Vietnam. The main causes of death that have caused this higher death rate among one group of national servicemen over the other are alcoholic liver disease, lung and pancreatic cancer, motor vehicle crashes and suicide.

**Comments / Issues**

8. A major cause of some of the diseases above are alcohol and tobacco. Why might alcohol and tobacco have been a large part of many soldiers’ lives in Vietnam?

9. The issues above have all been about the veterans. Who else would have been greatly affected by these situations?

More information about these and other issues and support services for Vietnam veterans and their families is available at:

Department of Veterans’ Affairs
http://www.dva.gov.au

Vietnam Veterans’ Association of Australia
http://www.vvaa.org.au
Imagine that a terrible disaster has struck your area — it may be war, flood, drought, fire, or some other catastrophe.

You have to leave your home. There is just no choice.

You can only carry five things with you. You cannot rely on anyone else because you are aware that you may be separated from your family — perhaps for a long time, perhaps even forever!

Look at this list of 21 possible items to take. You can choose no more than five. Make your choice and explain why you chose those five and why you did not choose the remaining 16. Make your choices now and tick those you choose. Good luck!

- Clothes
- Blanket
- Favourite toy
- Pet dog
- Passport
- Extra food
- Cash
- Photograph album
- Favourite CD
- iPod
- Laptop computer
- Carving knife
- Your birth and school certificates
- Your favourite leather jacket
- Letters from your dead brother
- Credit card
- Title deed to a house that you own
- Camera and film
- Your grandfather's watch, handed down as an heirloom
- The expensive book you borrowed from a friend
- The nearly finished novel you have been writing for the last 10 years

In 1975, when the North Vietnamese Army took Saigon and won the war, many Vietnamese had to become refugees. Many fled straight away; others had to wait many years before they could escape.

Of course, they did not have many of the objects above to choose from; but the principle was the same: when you can only take the objects that you can carry, what do you choose? And then how do you create a new life in another country?

The following information will help you think about how these issues affected Vietnamese who came to Australia.

**Who came to Australia?**

**SOURCE 1** An overview


A final group, in 1989–1991, were economic refugees — mainly small traders, rural and urban workers and some unemployed. Most were brought to Australia from refugee camps. A few made it here directly by boat.

Since the mid-1990s Vietnamese migration has mostly been for the reunion of families. By 1981, 43 400 Vietnamese had been resettled in Australia. By 1991 there were 124 800 Vietnam-born in Australia and in the 2001 census, 154 000 people declared themselves as Vietnam-born.
Look at the following sources and answer the questions associated with each.

**SOURCE 2 Coming to Australia**

I came from a middle class Catholic family in Vietnam. My parents were former officers of the South Vietnamese army and my father was active in the anti-communist movement. My parents were made refugees twice: the first time fleeing from North Vietnam to South Vietnam when communists took government in 1954; the second was when we left Vietnam bound for Australia following the fall of South Vietnam to the Viet Cong. While many people probably benefited from the new regime, my parents were not one of them. They witnessed the arbitrary arrests, torture, executions and persecution for certain classes of people considered bourgeoisie or traitors by the communists. They witnessed the devastation of terrorism and civil war.

To flee one’s country is not an easy choice to make. You’re leaving behind your homes, your relatives and friends, your culture, your possessions, your memories, your childhood. Fleeing a country on a boat is also a dangerous affair. People speak of the savagery of being looted, raped and killed by pirates at sea. People talk about the unspeakable horrors of resorting to cannibalism of the dead to regain enough strength to fix the boat’s engine. Many of us had knowledge of this so why did we take the risk?

We seek freedom because the government we were escaping did not respect our freedom. You will find this is a common story among refugees.

We were the relatively lucky boatpeople who did not encounter pirates, whose boat was not blown off course by storms, and who were rescued just in time. However, the journey was no less perilous. One infant, who would be my age today, died during the journey. On the third day our water supply was contaminated. We were all thirsty and frightened to the point where we could have given up altogether. But we took the gamble because we believed the risk at sea was still better than staying in communist Vietnam.

Minh Nguyen, Extract from a talk given to high school students at St Scholastica College, Glebe, Sydney, 8 March 2004, http://www.acmica.org/pub_nguyen-refugees.html

1. How typical or untypical of Vietnamese refugees to Australia was Minh Nguyen?
2. Why did her family risk everything to escape?

How is the post-war Vietnamese migration represented in Australia today?

Here are two museum displays of this aspect of modern Australian history. Look at them and answer the questions that follow.

**SOURCE 3 Representation of Vietnamese migration in Australian museums**

A suitcase, the only luggage brought by refugee Cuc Lam to Australia from a refugee camp in Malaysia.

Display about the refugee boat. Hong Hai

1. How typical or untypical was their refugee journey?
2. Why do you think Australia took such refugees?
What does each display show?

What aspects of the story of Vietnamese migration to Australia after the Vietnam War are being stressed through these displays?

Why are the elements on display seen as significant symbols of the story?

Do you think these displays are representing the story effectively? Explain your reasons.

Imagine that you have been asked to add another object to a museum display to tell a missing part of the story. What would you choose, and why?

You should try to have some Vietnamese people speak to your class about their refugee experience. Or you may know some people whom you could interview.

You can explore this more if you Curate an Exhibition of the experience of Vietnamese refugees to Australia.
On 3 October 1987, 25,000 Vietnam veterans marched in a welcome home parade through Sydney to the cheers of hundreds of thousands. It was the greatest emotional outpouring witnessed in decades.

A quotation on the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial

**FOCUS QUESTIONS:**

- How has the Vietnam War been commemorated in Australia?
- What is its meaning for you today?

Crowds line the streets to watch the Welcome Home Parade, Sydney, 3 October 1987.

AWM PAIU0087.227.07
Teaching Suggestions

1 Background information

Commemoration

Australia’s war heritage is a significant part of our national identity. We commemorate our involvement in wars, conflicts and peace operations through memorials and ceremonies. Is the Vietnam War an accepted part of this commemoration?

On 17 August 2006, on the eve of the 40th anniversary commemoration of the Battle of Long Tan, Graham Edwards, the only Federal Member of Parliament who is a Vietnam veteran, wrote: ‘Today is a day when our federal Parliament should honour our Vietnam veterans, recognise their service and say to them that they did a good job in the best tradition of the Anzacs … Today is a day when we should say we are proud of our Vietnam veterans. A day when we honour and recognise their sacrifice, service and their suffering. I think it is also a time to reflect on the horror of war, the lasting trauma of those involved and the terror and suffering of innocent civilians caught in the devastation of war.’ (House of Representatives Hansard, 17 August 2006, page 42)

How does the nation now commemorate Australia’s Vietnam war?

1987 Welcome Home Parade

The first significant act of commemoration of the Australian experience of war in Vietnam was in 1987, when the Vietnam Veterans’ Association of Australia organised a national ‘Welcome Home’ march through Sydney. Twenty-five thousand veterans took part. For many this was the gesture of reconciliation by Australia that they had been looking for. This was the admission that they should not have been shunned and abused on their return from Vietnam. The nation was acknowledging the value of what they had done. For these men, they could now let go of much of their anger and feelings of rejection.

1996 Vietnam pilgrimage

In 1996 another gesture of reconciliation and closure took place. A group of 30 veterans, representative of all elements that had served in Vietnam, returned on a pilgrimage. They visited Saigon, Nui Dat, Vung Tau and Long Tan, in a symbolic gesture of ‘laying the ghosts’. Most had not returned since the war and they were both apprehensive and excited. Some had a chance to visit the graves of mates who had been killed in the war and were buried at Terendak Cemetery in Singapore. All had a chance to revisit significant places in their lives and to reflect on its meaning to them now. Most were able to see that Vietnam had moved on and the war meant less to most Vietnamese than it did to these foreigners who had fought it; some still had demons that refused to be settled. One veteran of Long Tan who had lain wounded and terrified on the battlefield all night, refused to sit under shelter from the blazing sun during a commemorative ceremony. ‘I’m not going to let the bastards beat me now’, he said.

Many soldiers make individual or group returns to Vietnam. Many have been involved in aid programs, such as the building of a new school at Long Tan.

2002 National Memorial

In 2002 the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial was re-dedicated, 10 years after it was originally dedicated in 1992. It sits in Anzac Parade, together with the other national memorials to Australia’s wars, armed services, allies and some former enemies.

2006 40th Anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan

On 18 August 2006 there were commemorations for the 40th anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan. This battle has been adopted as the official Australian commemorative day of the Vietnam War. Speeches, newspaper editorials and reports celebrated the achievements of the men of Long Tan, but also sought to encompass the Vietnam War into the Anzac tradition. Prime Minister Howard said: ‘The sad fact is that those who served in Vietnam were not welcomed back as they should have been. Whatever our views may have been—and I include those who supported the war as well as those who opposed it—the nation collectively failed those men. They are owed our apologies and our regrets for that failure. The very least that we can do on this 40th anniversary is to acknowledge that fact, to acknowledge the difficulties that so many of them have had in coping with the postwar trauma and to acknowledge the magnificent contribution that they have continued to make to our nation.’ (House of Representatives Hansard, 17 August 2006, page 41)
How should Australia’s Vietnam War be commemorated?

Has this happened? Is the Vietnam War commemorated as part of the Anzac tradition? What image do young people today have of Australia’s Vietnam War, and is this changing over time? What should we be commemorating in our public representations of that part of our heritage? These are all issues that students can address in this topic.

2 Key learning outcomes

By the end of this topic students will be better able to:

- Compare ways in which Australia’s Vietnam War has been commemorated over time
- Analyse the place of the Vietnam War in the Anzac tradition
- Determine its meaning for students today

3 Classroom activities

ACTIVITY 1

This activity starts students thinking about public commemoration. The best place to start is with students’ own community. After students have listed the memorials in their community, they will be able to consider why these events are being commemorated, and what this community is telling people about its values, attitudes and past through these public statements.

ACTIVITY 2

Students here compare four different images of the Vietnam War as expressed through commemoration. They will see the way different ideas and messages can be presented, as well as changed over time.

ACTIVITY 3

The aim here is to have students think about symbols, ideas, words and shapes in representations and how they can all be brought together to create powerful messages. This activity is also available in an interactive way on the *Australia and the Vietnam War* CD-ROM.

4 Interactive CD-ROM and DVD resources

Interacts on the *Australia and the Vietnam War* CD-ROM that are appropriate learning tasks for this unit are:

- Explore the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial (Primary and Secondary)
- Analyse a Vietnam War Roll of Honour (Secondary)
What is commemoration?

Think about your local community. There are many different types of memorials. These memorials have been created to commemorate — formally remember — events that the community says are important and that the community wants its members to keep as part of its values and identity.

1 List any memorials in your community.

Many of these memorials are to do with war. Australia has been involved in many wars, conflicts and peace operations and these are seen as a significant part of our national identity and heritage.

2 Here is a list of some major wars, conflicts and battles that Australia has been involved in. Write down your image of each event’s place in Australian identity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>War/conflict/battle</th>
<th>The meaning that this war/conflict/battle has for Australia is:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World War I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallipoli</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World War II</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kokoda</td>
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<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Malayan Emergency</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Indonesian Confrontation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peacekeeping (eg East Timor)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern conflicts (Iraq, Afghanistan)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The idea or image that people have about a war can change. For example, the main popular image of the Vietnam War has probably changed several times. In the 1970s it was a controversial war, with many believing that Australia should not have been involved and that its main meaning was to show the suffering war caused civilians; in the 1980s and 1990s a major image was of the social alienation and the physical and psychological suffering of many veterans of the war; in the 2000s emphasis is now on the bravery and achievement of the symbolic battle of the war, Long Tan.

In this topic you will be asked to consider how we have commemorated the Vietnam War in the past, what your own image of the war is now and how you think the war should be commemorated in the future.
How has the Vietnam War been commemorated in Australia over time?

1 A popular song

In 1983 the Australian band Redgum wrote the song I Was Only 19 about the Vietnam War. Look at this song and answer the questions that follow.

1. What is the story that this song tells?
2. What is the attitude of the soldier at the start?
3. What is the meaning of ‘God help me, I was only nineteen’ the first time it is used?
4. The soldier’s attitude changes with the experience of war. What keeps him going?
5. What is his attitude when he returns home?
6. What is the meaning of ‘God help me, I was only nineteen’ the last time it is used?
7. What does he say about the Anzac legend and his place in it?
8. The song was written by a man who opposed the war, was for a time a communist and who spoke to several veterans before writing it. How do you explain this apparent contradiction between his opposing the war and writing this song?
9. What is the overall image or representation of Vietnam veterans that this song creates?
10. Look back at your image of the Vietnam War. Will you change anything as a result of thinking about this song?

I Was Only 19 (A Walk in the Light Green)

Mum and Dad and Denny saw the passing out parade at Puckapunyal (It was long march from cadets).
The Sixth Battalion was the next to tour and it was me who drew the card.2
We did Canungra and Shoalwater before we left.
And Townsville lined the footpath as we marched down to the quay.
This clipping from the paper shows us young and strong and clean.
And there’s me in my slouch hat, with my SLR4 and greens …
God help me, I was only nineteen.

From Vung Tau riding Chinooks to the dust at Nui Dat,
I’d been in and out of choppers now for months.
But we made our tents a home, VB and pin-ups on the lockers,
And an Asian orange sunset through the scrub.
And can you tell me, doctor, why I still can’t get to sleep?
And night time’s just a jungle dark and a barking M166?
And what’s this rash that comes and goes, can you tell me what it means?
God help me, I was only nineteen.

A four week operation, when each step could mean your last one on two legs:
It was a war within yourself.
But you wouldn’t let your mates down ‘till they had you dusted off’,
So you closed your eyes and thought about something else.
Then someone yelled out ‘Contact’8, and the bloke behind me swore.
We hooked in there for hours, then a God almighty roar;
Frankie9 kicked a mine the day that mankind kicked the moon:9

God help me, he was going home in June.

I can still see Frankie, drinking tinnies in the Grand Hotel
On a thirty-six hour rec. leave in Vung Tau.
And I can still hear Frankie lying screaming in the jungle.
‘Till the morphine came and killed the bloody row
And the Anzac legends didn’t mention mud and blood and tears,
And stories that my father told me never seemed quite real.
I caught some pieces in my back that I didn’t even feel …

God help me, I was only nineteen.

Words and music by J Schumann © Universal Music Publishing P/L. Reprinted with permission. All rights reserved. (John Schumann discusses the writing of this song for Mick Storer and Frank Hunt at http://www.abc.net.au/dimensions/dimensions_people/Transcripts/s881927.htm) Frank Hunt’s story is included in Gina Lennox, Forged By War, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2006)
2 1987 Welcome Home March

On 3 October 1987, 25,000 Australian ex-servicemen and women who had served in Vietnam gathered in the Sydney Domain. They set off behind 500 Australian flags – each one representing one of the Australian dead in the Vietnam War. They were cheered by the huge crowd. Many of them wept at the reception and recognition they received.

Why was this event so important in the lives of so many of these Vietnam veterans? Look at these stories of the experiences of some of the veterans in Sydney on that day and answer the questions that follow.

Quotations are all adapted from veterans’ comments in Noel Giblett, *Homecomings*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1990
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A We didn’t all come home together. So there was no sense of a proper farewell to all the mates. We had become very close as a unit and then suddenly we were separated, never to see each other again.

B I was injured, lost my legs. Suddenly I was gone, with no chance to say farewell. I was on patrol, in the hospital, then back in Australia. Just like that. There was no ‘closure’ on my experiences in Vietnam.

C We got in at 4 am in Sydney. We walked off the plane — and I kissed the tarmac. We went through Customs, I remember the Customs bloke saying ‘Welcome home’ to each of us. But that was it. We’d come in on the quiet through the back door like we’d gone.

D When I got home there were demonstrations against the war going on. At one stage I was still in my uniform. I could feel the people laughing at me. I felt like running out and grabbing their placards and asking what first hand knowledge they had about what they were protesting about.

E Catching up with family and friends was weird. Nobody asked me about what had happened. The only ones who could understand anyway were those who had been through it.

F We met mates again, we were welcomed by the Australian people, we no longer had to feel almost unclean about what we had done and where we had been. At last Australia was recognising those men and women it had shunned for so many years. Call it an emotional healing. Call it a Welcome Home. The fact is that many of us are now able to stand up and say with pride ‘I’m a Vietnam veteran’. And people are listening.

1 What was the problem with the way many Vietnam veterans had returned to Australia?

2 Why do you think Australians had not welcomed the troops back at the time?

3 Why was the 1987 event so important to so many of these veterans?

4 Look back at your image of the Vietnam War. Will you change anything as a result of thinking about this parade?
3 The Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial

In 2002 the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial was re-dedicated to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the commencement of Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam War. It is located in Anzac Parade, with the national memorials to Australia’s other major wars and conflicts.

The main elements of the memorial are:
- Three walls creating a gloomy and dappled interior.
- A wall of words — quotations from the war.
- A huge engraving of a famous photograph.
- Six small blocks of stone, naming the six Australians whose bodies were never recovered.
- A suspended halo, containing the names of the 520 Australians who died during their Vietnam War service.

Look at these images of the memorial and answer the following questions.

1. What is the significance or symbolism of the location?
2. What are the main features of the memorial?
3. What messages or meanings do you think it is presenting?
4. What is being commemorated here?

Look back at your image of the Vietnam War. Will you change anything as a result of thinking about this memorial?

You can explore this memorial further on the CD-ROM.
The 40th Anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan

In 2006 Australia commemorated the 40th anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan. This battle is symbolic of the Australian involvement in the Vietnam War. Look at this newspaper account of the official ceremonies in Canberra and answer these questions:

1. What is special about Long Tan?
2. What is the main message in the article about the men who fought at Long Tan?
3. What does the writer say is Vietnam’s place in the national consciousness?
4. How is Vietnam linked by Prime Minister Howard to the Anzac tradition?
5. Look back at your image of the Vietnam War. Will you change anything as a result of thinking about this event?

Tears and cheer as Vietnam veterans find home
Gillian Lord

Hundreds of veterans turned out at 6.30am yesterday for a stand-to ceremony on the memorial parade ground to honour the men who fought the bloody and determined battle of Long Tan on August 18, 1966.

Later in the morning about 3000 veterans and their families gathered for a Vietnam Veterans’ Day memorial service at the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial on Anzac Parade, to pay their respects to those who served in Vietnam, and those who didn’t come home … Vietnam has matured in the national consciousness, from being a bitter, unacknowledged and unpopular war, to becoming part of Australia’s identity.

Paying tribute and noting that 2006 marked the anniversary of both the Battle of Fromelles and the Battle of Long Tan, Prime Minister John Howard said that both events, although 50 years and thousands of miles apart, had helped shape Australia and define the common characteristics of Australians — courage, initiative, individual fortitude and mateship.

After apologising the day before for the past treatment of Vietnam veterans, Mr Howard was visibly moved at yesterday’s memorial service; solemn and sombre as the honour roll of the 18 young men who died at Long Tan was read out, with their average age of 21.

And, if the reaction of the veterans yesterday was anything to go by, it was a case of “apology accepted” …

With medals clinking on their chests, the unbreakable bonds that formed in war were very evident — quiet hands that steadied a mate when emotions swelled, warm embraces shared among friends who hadn’t seen each other in a while, eyes shining with pleasure and even some tears …

At both ceremonies the Iroquois helicopters flew overhead, and on both occasions the diggers’ faces flooded with emotion, with one man, trembling and faint, being held tightly by friends on either side. They were all veterans. They all understood …

For Canberra’s Adrian Roberts, it was a day to honour the five blokes from his troop who lost their lives between June 1966 and May 1967. A lieutenant and the commander of 3 Troop Armoured Personnel Carriers, that effectively ended the Battle of Long Tan, Roberts had designed the wreath he laid with special care for the men of 1 Armoured Personnel Squadron/A Squadron 3rd Cavalry Regiment: Five white roses, “one for each of my blokes — white being the colour of death in Vietnam”; green leaves for the rubber of Vietnam — “we were always in rubber”, and red gerberas for the sacrifice. A card with the name of each man and the date he died accompanied, with the message, “We have gone on ahead and will meet you at the end of the day.”

The Canberra Times, Saturday, 19 August 2006

You can find out more by Analysing a Vietnam War Roll of Honour
Imagine that you have been asked to design a memorial for your local community to commemorate Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam War.

Physical appearance: What will it look like? Will it be realistic or abstract? Why choose that shape and style?

Facts: Do you need to give any explanation of the war to people looking at your memorial? If so, what will you say?

Symbols: Are there any symbols that particularly represent the Vietnam War? For example, a helicopter, or a jungle hat? Any special colours? Shapes? Textures? Plants?

Messages or meanings: What are the main messages or meanings that you want people to gain from the memorial? Is it to do with peace? War? People’s qualities? The impacts on people’s lives? Ideas?

Controversies Will you include the home front aspect of the war as an element? (This is done in many World War I memorials, where local memorials often include the names of those who volunteered, as well as those who died — how would those ‘eligible’ men in the community who chose not to go have felt about this constant public comment on their behaviour?) Should those men who, out of conscience, went to prison for their anti-conscription or anti-war beliefs be included on the memorial?

Words: Are there particular words or phrases that you would use? Will you include ‘message’ words about remembrance? Will you, like the national memorial, include characteristic phrases from the war?

Other: Are there any other features that you will include? List and discuss them.