

Speech by Mayor Logan K Howlett JP
Vietnam War Veterans Memorial Service
City of Cockburn RSL, Hamilton Hill
Tuesday, 18 August 2026

Distinguished guests, veterans, serving members of the Australian Defence Force, ladies and gentlemen.

Each year we gather to honour those who served in the Vietnam War, to remember those who did not return, and to acknowledge those who came home carrying the burdens of war long after the fighting had ended.

More than 60,000 Australians served in Vietnam during a decade of conflict.

It was a war that divided communities, prompted passionate debate and touched the lives of countless Australian families.

For many veterans, the journey home was not always accompanied by the recognition and gratitude they deserved.

Today, more than fifty years later, much has changed.

Many of the young men who served in Vietnam are now grandfathers and great-grandfathers.

Some who once stood shoulder to shoulder at services such as this are no longer with us.

Their places are now filled by family members, younger generations and friends committed to ensuring their stories are never forgotten.

I often reflect on how remembrance changes with time.

When the war was recent, memories were sharp and immediate.

People remembered the news reports, the protests, the uncertainty and the anxiety that accompanied National Service.

Many of us remember mates whose lives were changed forever by the experience of serving their country.

I recall losing two of my best mates. One had just returned from his tour of duty in Vietnam having left our small crayfishing settlement up the coast as a long haired, bearded and scruffy looking guy.

His return was unannounced and we struggled to identify the short haired and clean-shaven guy entering our close-knit settlement.

Unfortunately, within weeks of his return he was to be lost at sea in a tragic accident – two mates lost at that one time.

Today, for many Australians, Vietnam is no longer a lived experience.

It is a story passed from one generation to the next.

A story told around kitchen tables.

A story shared between grandparents and grandchildren.

A story preserved by organisations such as the Cockburn RSL, whose members continue to ensure that the sacrifices of veterans remain part of our community's collective memory.

And that is why services such as this remain so important.

Remembrance is not simply about looking back.

It is about carrying forward the values demonstrated by those who served: courage, mateship, resilience and commitment to others.

These qualities helped shape our nation and continue to inspire future generations.

To our Vietnam veterans, let it be known that your service is remembered, your sacrifices are honoured and your stories continue to matter.

To your families, we acknowledge the support, strength and understanding you have provided over many decades.

And to all those currently serving our nation, whether here at home or overseas, we thank you for your commitment to the freedoms and way of life we enjoy today.

As we leave this service, may we continue to tell these stories, share these memories and pass this legacy on to those who follow us.

For as long as we remember, their service will never be forgotten.

Lest we forget.