

# **Vietnam Veterans Memorial Day Service 2013**

**Address**

**by**

**Logan K Howlett, JP**

**Mayor**

**City of Cockburn**

**at**

**The RSL Hall, Frederick Street, Hamilton Hill**

**on**

**Sunday 18 August 2013**

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Distinguished guests, Vietnam Veterans and other Veterans here today, our serving men and women of the Australian Defence Force, Members of the 1<sup>st</sup> Bibra Lake Scout Group, ladies and gentlemen, girls and boys.

I acknowledge the Noongar people who are the traditional custodians of the land that we are gathered on this morning and I pay respect to their elders both past and present and extend that respect to other Indigenous Australians that are present.

As we gather here today I reflect on the Memorial Hall down the road from here. It was built to perpetuate the memory of the soldiers and sailors of Hamilton Hill who fought in World War One.

It was a time when the community had come together to raise funds for the specific purpose of having a place where they could meet, socialise, commemorate their lost 'sons' and develop a resilience that would 'see them through' the times ahead.

The official opening of the Memorial Hall occurred on the 21 March 1925, the ceremony being conducted by the then Governor of Western Australia, Sir William Campion who laid the Foundation

Stone followed by a second stone laid by Mr. Winfield, the then Honorary Secretary of the Memorial Association.

An Honour Board was also unveiled by Mrs Dixon and Mrs Poole on behalf of the mothers of the district.

The hall and its surrounds has stood the test of time and continues to be a place where the community comes together to meet, socialise, commemorate their lost 'sons' and develop a level of resilience to 'see them through' the times ahead.

In 1960/61 it was the Mothers again who saw their young sons called up to serve their country – who saw them leave for a far off place called Vietnam – a place they knew little or nothing about and for all intents and purposes it would change their lives, their son's lives and that of their families for all time.

Not too long after that telegrams started to be delivered to the door, the cries of heartbroken mothers and families drifted across the neighbourhoods, coverage of the war entered our living rooms on the screens of recently acquired black & white televisions, war time correspondents sent their stories across the airwaves – radios carefully placed on kitchen tables crackled away day and night, protests occurred in the streets of our capital cities and still more young men were conscripted to those far distant lands of Vietnam, a place we new little, if anything about.

Then as almost as quick as it had begun, the guns fell silent, a misty and eerie calm befell Vietnam as our boys and those from the US and New Zealand and other nations headed home.

In one sense, our boys were met by that same eerie silence, a silence from the community that was so unlike the communities that had gathered after World War 1 and World War 11 – the community that gathered to raise funds to built the Memorial Hall – a community galvanised in support of their boys who returned and those that didn't. Our boys returning from Vietnam were not afforded that same honour and recognition.

History is painted with a broad brush – painted on different mediums by differently intentioned artists eager to get their message across.

It is only when we go into detail about the background; the history; that we see the strength and resilience of the paper, cardboard, canvas; wood or silk used to form the foundation of the artwork.

It is only when we examine the layers of paint used and the emerging images that we start to understand what the intent of the artist may have been.

We are all different, we see things in different ways, depending on our upbringing, education, exposure to events, influences from near and afar – ours is a rich tapestry of life – starting from a blank canvas and evolving with each brushstroke – the final image yet to be completed.

However, we must look beyond the images; to the stories of the people.

We know that history doesn't change, it repeats itself.

Or is it us that can't leave its shadow?

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Ladies and gentlemen, girls and boys.

The Vietnam and other Veterans before us today and those who have since passed on were also prepared to sacrifice their life for their country in the protection of peoples of a far off land. Their Mothers wept as they left our shores and again when they returned or in some cases, never returned.

They, together with hundreds of Australians in the Vietnam War who lost their lives leave us a legacy of mateship, courage, sacrifice and gallantry that we should all aspire too in our daily lives, our contribution to the community and to building our national pride and spirit.

They are a part of the stories, the images, the creation of history that has, and continues the legend of the ANZAC's.

They are the reason why Mothers continue to keep the home fires burning for their sons, and increasingly, their daughters who serve this great nation.

Lest we Forget.