

Speech
by
Mayor Logan K Howlett, JP
on the occasion of
The Vietnam Veterans
Memorial Day Service
Thursday 18 August 2017
City of Cockburn RSL

Good Morning.

Distinguished guests, Veterans, serving men and women of the Australian Defence Force, ladies and gentlemen, girls and boys.

The Western Australian Vietnam Memorial Pavilion was dedicated in Kings Park on 1st October, 1989.

Surprisingly the building itself was built in 1899, yes; 1899. It was formerly the Anglican Mortuary Chapel located at Karrakatta Cemetery.

The pavilion was dismantled and relocated to Kings Park in October 1988.

On the rear wall engraved on black marble are the names of the 61 Western Australian servicemen who made the supreme sacrifice.

The memorial is protected by steel gates, originally used at the entrance of the Western Australian Museum bringing together a memorial with a significant history in itself.

Outside the building is a full size bronze statue depicting two soldiers, one from the Australian army and the other from the South Vietnamese army. Sculptor Khoat van Nguyen took twelve months to cast the statue which stands on a polished granite plinth in front of the Vietnam memorial.

As we know, the peacefulness and tranquility of Kings Park attracts tens of thousands of visitors each year. They come from near and far to enjoy the opportunity of families and friends coming together, to admire the views, dine at restaurants or picnic on the lawns; it is a place of great beauty and also a place of reflection.

The Vietnam Memorial Pavilion in Synergy Parkland on May Drive is nestled amongst a backdrop of Australian bushland and in its foreground green manicured lawns leading to an unsurpassed view over Perth with the Darling Ranges in the background.

If not for the efforts of the Australian Vietnam Forces Memorial Trust who raised the funds and created the impetus for its re-location to Kings Park the memorial may still be a distant dream.

While it is a somber place of reflection for our Vietnam veterans and their families, this Pavilion is also a tribute to the freedom that all Australians enjoy largely due to the efforts of our Aussie and Kiwi boys who stood in the glow of the ANZAC spirit and did us proud – they kept the ANZAC tradition alive during a difficult and at times tense war.

Those at home will vividly recall how the war invaded our airwaves, become the front covers of our newspapers and added to the homeland debate in a way never seen before in our communities.

Time has healed our divisions and sacrifice has sealed our destiny.

On the occasions that my family and I visit the Vietnam Memorial Pavilion to pay our respects to the fallen:

- we wonder at the Kookaburras calling for our attention in the nearby bushland;
- we admire the children laughing and playing on the manicured lawns;
- running in and around the majestic trees;
- dodging in and out of the water playground;
- families laying out their picnic blanket to enjoy a bite to eat;
- parents and grandparents enjoying their day in the sun, talking about their plans for the future, the next holiday, sporting day or the myriad of other things that drift into our minds or that are sparked by the conversations we are engaged in.

We all know without saying that our freedom has and continues to be guaranteed by:

- those who made the ultimate sacrifice,
- those who became the Veterans we have grown to admire and respect; and
- those young men and women who stand tall as members of the Australian Defence Force in today's technological era where the pressing of a single button can result in a target being hit several hundreds, if not thousands of kilometers away – sight unseen.

Memory is more than a single word.

It is today's living reflection of yesterday.

The young men who gave their lives in the Vietnam War had foregone the opportunity to be lying in the sun, gathering with their friends and families, eager to talk about tomorrow, and making plans for the future.

Their tomorrows were never to be.

They would not return to see the flash of colour from the flower gardens, to admire the manicured lawns, to hear the birds singing from the nearby trees or to spend a lifetime with a loved one, age alongside friends, as we are lucky to age with our loved ones and friends.

Their names will forever be held in our hearts, as will all who returned home – with each passing year their contributions will continue to be acknowledged and honoured – for they have kept the ANZAC spirit alive.

Lest we forget.