

## **ARMYNEWS Article-for RAASC Plaque Dedication 26Mar2010**

By Cpl Zenith King

MORE than 3000 Royal Australian Army Service Corps (RAASC) veterans where recognised for their service in Vietnam with a plaque dedication at the Australian War Memorial (AWM).

On March 27, former comrades, wives and partners watched on as soldiers from the Corps were remembered for their operational service from 1966-1972.

Patron of the RAASC Vietnam Supply Platoon Association Maj-Gen David McLachlan, said although their corps units did not operate major war fighting equipment they enable those that did to do so.

"During the early stages of deployment men and machines were run to there limits establishing the infrastructure at both Nui Dat and Vung Tau," Maj-Gen McLachlan said.

When addressing the audience Maj-Gen McLachlan emphasised the unit's activities were always diverse.

"We were often tasked to provide patrols ranging from sections to platoon sized. Such patrols had tasks ranging from and including overnight ambushes standing patrols fighting patrols and the provision of protection parties for overnight civil aid."

Anthony Galea, Former Cpl 25 Sup Pl, spoke of his time in Vietnam when in 1968 Viet Cong where trying to take Saigon.

"We set up a fire support base about 60 miles north of Saigon they actually hit us three times during the night and we lost our standing patrol when a mortar hit them. I was in RAASC and I thought what am I doing out here," Mr Galea said.

Whether they were conscripted or enlisted soldiers came from all over Australia and served one year of duty in Vietnam.

Detachments of the corps first deployed to South Vietnam in May 1965 and established a base at Vung Tau drawing their supplies, ammuniton and fuel from the US system.

Former driver, 85 Tpt Pl, Bruce Wilson served in Vietnam from 1969-70. He was based at Nui Dat's Task Force Maintenance area and provided transport services to the field.

"Many of us were national service men, in the 1970s the government held a ballot for all 20 year olds and those who had there number picked out served two years of military service. That's what happened to me," Mr Wilson said.

"It commemorates the service corps. Lots of attention, quite rightly, is given to the combatant units but this is a good commemoration to us."

Former OC 25 Sup Pl Bruce Manning, began the three year process of design and negotiation with the AWM after being approached by one of his mates.

"One of our number expressed regret, guilt and dare I say it a level of shame that he did not serve in the fighting element in the army in Vietnam," Mr Manning said.

Working with the AWM Mr Manning wanted to recognise non combative soldiers who served in Vietnam.

"What we wanted was to identify the platoons not the battalions."

"Now former soldiers can come and proudly find their own place among Canberra's memorials."

Reverend Ken Jarvis blessed the plaque. Brig Geoff Christopherson and Tracey Kelly granddaughter of the late SSgt Keith Luff unveiled the plaque, provide a symbolic link to future generations.

Maj-Gen McLachlan said the plaque left in the care of the AWM commemorates the service of their corps.

"It represents the three units shown and includes reference to all the sub unit's and specialists units who were with them." Maj-Gen McLachlan said.

"As you leave this sacred place today chant over and over in your mind our corps. Do so with the knowledge that you its officers and soldiers in South Vietnam were always Par Oneri: equal to the task."

Breakout:

1 Company was the first corps unit to deploy to Vietnam.

RAASC

HQ 1 Coy	21 Sup Coy
HQ 5 Coy	25 Sup Coy
HQ 26 Coy	Det 52 Sup Pl
1 Tpt Pl	Det 8 Pet Pl
2 Tpt Pl	Det 176 AD Coy
85 Tpt Pl	Det 1 Div ST Wksp
86 Tpt Pl	Det 1 Div Postal Unit
87 Tpt Pl	Det 1 Comm 2 Postal unit

1 coy served in Vietnam April 66 - July 67 and was replaced by 5 coy RAASC. That coy remain 1972. The third unit to be was 26 coy which arrived in December 1967 at Nui Dat.

3500 personnel served in Vietnam during conflict  
2400 served in corps units  
1100 in various headquarters and non corps appointments  
35 members of the corps served with AATTV in Le Mat