

MEDIA RELEASE

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UNVEILING OF THE CANUNGRA VIETNAM MEMORIAL RELOCATION AT KOKODA BARRACKS

After two years of limited access the Canungra Vietnam Memorial is now open to veterans, families and the local community following six months of dedicated volunteer work and community collaboration to relocate the poignant memorial.

Previously situated within the confines of the Kokoda Barracks in Canungra, the very place where all Vietnam soldiers were trained before being deployed, the Vietnam memorial has been moved to the front gates of the barracks to allow access to the wider public.

The original memorial site was constructed in 2000 by veteran volunteers and community but the need for relocation arose due to heightened security measures, limiting public access and ongoing maintenance of the original site.

Thanks to the leadership of Doug Henderson from the Kokoda Youth Foundation, a collaborative committee, and generous support from various organisations, the memorial finds a new accessible home.

“The Land Warfare Centre, once known as the Jungle Training Centre, holds deep-seated memories for us Vietnam veterans” says Doug, a veteran from 6RAR. “This project pays tribute to the sacrifices and resilience of everyone tied to the Vietnam War, recognising their sheer courage and unwavering strength.”

Integral to this monumental project has been the tireless dedication of volunteers who wholeheartedly believed in the significance of this memorial. Volunteers from various backgrounds, including veterans’ families, local community members, and passionate individuals, lent their time, expertise, and commitment to ensure this relocation became a reality.

Designed by architect Tony Battams of Choice Homes, the new memorial site maintains its essence while offering a refreshed landscape paying homage to the Vietnam War, symbolised by the iconic Long Tan Cross of which the memorial is shaped. At the heart of the site stands a life-sized bronze statue of a Vietnam soldier, an evocative addition funded by the Commonwealth Government’s Saluting Their Service grant program.

“It is wonderful that we have been able to continue and add to the good work of veterans from 23 years ago by bringing this memorial back into public access and with a few additional items that will ensure the story of the Vietnam war is shared for generations to come”. said Graham Gordon, Vietnam veteran, secretary of Runaway Bay RSL and committee member of the Relocation Project.

Scheduled for unveiling on Friday December 1st, 2023, at 11 am, this event marks a significant moment for the community. It commemorates the sacrifices of our veterans and their families while serving as an educational legacy for future generations. Information tables sharing the historical significance of the Vietnam War and its connections to the Land Warfare Centre will enrich visitors' experiences.

“Kokoda Barracks and the Kokoda Youth Foundation have established a wonderful partnership over the years. This memorial honours those brave soldiers who have come before us and will serve as a place of reflection for those who continue to serve now and into the future” says Lieutenant Colonel Wendy Say, the Senior Australian Defence Force Officer for Kokoda Barracks. “I am so very thankful for the amazing work of the Kokoda Youth Foundation – not just in relation to what they have achieved with leading this memorial project, but also what they do on a daily basis to support Australia’s youth.”

This achievement is the result of remarkable collaboration and support from entities such as Coast 2 Coast Earthmoving, STA Consulting Engineers, Axis Surveys and Australian Lawn Concepts. RSL Queensland, local RSL sub-branches, and numerous volunteers that generously contributed time, resources, and expertise.

Join us on December 1st, 2023, as we come together to unveil this cherished memorial, inviting the community to pay tribute, reflect, and honour the indelible legacy of those who served in Vietnam.

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For more media information, please contact:

Jessica Wilson

Marketing Manager

media@kokodachallenge.com

0433 707 846