

## CANCELLATION - 2021 4RAR NATIONAL REUNION

The reunion planning committee met this morning. Against a background of continuing uncertainty regarding the outbreaks of Covid around Australia and the quarantine and isolation restrictions being imposed by the States, the committee has decided that the only responsible option is, regrettably, to cancel the reunion. (Note, our decision does not directly affect the DVA sponsored Commemorative Service nor the Last Post Ceremonies at the Australian War Memorial. See below.)

The decision in regard to the reunion was not taken lightly as we were aware that firstly, people were looking forward to catching up with old mates once again and secondly, it was important to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Operation Ivanhoe and the Battle of Nui Lé which saw the last Australian soldiers to be killed in action in the Vietnam War in September 1971; not forgetting as well to remember all the soldiers in the battalion who were killed in action since the battalion was raised in 1964; 37 in all.

The committee was also conscious of the fact that many of those attending would be incurring significant costs for travel to Canberra and for accommodation and meals while there. In the current environment to potentially expose members to possible further expense because of unforeseen State lock downs with the possibility of quarantine requirements in home States would have been totally irresponsible. Additionally, the reunion budget had to be considered in the context that several people had already cancelled their attendance and more cancellations were anticipated. In this event the financial viability of the reunion dinner could be placed in jeopardy. Such a situation was just not sustainable.

### Effect and Consequences

In practical terms, the decision means there will be no 'Meet and Greet' and no Reunion Dinner; nor will there be any registration.

Full refunds will be made for both the Meet and Greet and the Dinner, as well as for transport. Merchandise which has been paid for and ordered and the Port Decanters will be posted to members when received from the suppliers. The raffle will be drawn at a later date. Tickets are still available.

## Operation Ivanhoe Memorial Service and Last Post Ceremonies

As indicated above, the Commemorative Service will be held as planned on 20 September at the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial on Anzac Parade, Reid commencing at 10.30am. It is anticipated, notwithstanding the reunion being cancelled, that many people having planned to go to Canberra will continue with their plans and will want to go to this service. DVA has indicated that the arrangements the department has put in place will proceed, including bringing the NOK of the 5 soldiers killed during the Battle of Nui Lé to the service.

DVA will also provide transport to members of the battalion who intend to still go to Canberra from their hotels as planned, and back again after the service.

There will be two Last Post Ceremonies at the AWM: one, on 18 September and the second on 21 September. They will respectively remember Private 'Kiwi' Kingston-Powles and Private Ralph Niblett.

Further details on these arrangements will be promulgated in early September. In anticipation, it would assist with DVA's transport planning if members still going to Canberra could advise our Secretary, Wendy McLean as to their plans by Friday, 27 August.

## Conclusion

The decision to cancel the reunion is, to say the least, disappointing. It is doubtful anyone could have predicted the way world events have unfolded. Even without Covid, planning the reunion remotely was very difficult, but you had a very determined and hard-working committee.

It is quite possible that there will not be any further battalion reunions conducted as they have been in the past. Those of us who do go to Canberra as planned could usefully canvas this issue and maybe come up with some ideas. The issue needs to take account of the fact that the association does not have any of the younger veterans post-Vietnam. Attempts to entice them to date have been unsuccessful. The question needs to be asked, Can the association remain viable into the future?

I look forward to seeing some of you in Canberra.

Noel Fairley

President

4RAR Association Qld.Inc.

