

National Service Memorial at Keswick



A very moving and sombre service was conducted at the new Memorial Gardens at the side of the headquarters of the South Australian Branch of the National Servicemen's Association at 41 Surrey Road Keswick at 11.00 am on Friday 17 March 2017.

The service was to dedicate the Memorial Stone and Pathway with gold pavers that contain the names of over 500 national servicemen who

served in Australia and overseas and many who died on active service in Vietnam and Borneo. These pavers with their inscriptions were paid for by family members, ex- service associations and RSL Clubs and about the same amount of space are free for as many pavers again. Future plans include a 'Rose' garden that can be named in a soldier's honour.

His Excellency the Governor The Honourable Hieu Van Le AC was present to address the visitors and unveil the Memorial Stone. It was obvious that His Excellency was very moved by the occasion especially when unveiling the memorial stone. Over 400 local and interstate VIPs and guests attended with support provided by the Marion City Band, 413 Cadet Unit, Chaplains The Rev Dr Vern Cracknell, Pastor Rod Denton and Rev Norm Carter and Pipe Major Des Ross, Chief of Ross Clan in Australia, played the Lament. The Nation President Major Earle Jennings AM RFD ED (Rtd) and his wife also attended as they and other interstate delegates were attending a National Servicemen's Conference in Adelaide to coincide with this service.



This picture left shows Ken Duthie, in full Highland Regimental Dress of the Ross Clan with Colonel Peter Scott, DSO (Rtd) both ex 3RAR who attended the service. Of the 511 soldiers who were killed in Vietnam and twenty three

during confrontation in Borneo 210 were National Servicemen. 31 of these were South Australians and their names are listed on the National Servicemen's Memorial Stone in the gardens behind the West Torrens Town Hall. Some of these South Australians are included in these pavers by families and friends. Of those 31 South Australians 20 were killed whilst serving in one of the nine battalions of the Royal Australian Regiment. I was therefore very disappointed that the Regiment or any of the nine battalions concerned were not represented other than myself for 3RAR. It should be remembered that half of all soldiers in each battalion were to be national servicemen and mine, 3RAR second tour in 1971 was no exception.

The Coordinator of the project and the Master of Ceremonies for the service was Captain Barry Presgrave, OAM, JP (Rtd). Barry gave an excellent explanation of the last four years in the development of the project and the extensive list of sponsors. The RAR and battalion associations should get behind this project and recognise their national servicemen's contribution to their service. Application forms will be available at the RAR Clubrooms, 13 Beatty Street, Lindon Park, SA from next Friday 24 March or from me at psscott@kern.com.au Peter Scott.

From 3 RAR Robert Caston, Alan Cooper, Thomas DE Vries Van Leeuwen, Roger Fisher, David Paterson, Anthony Quigley and William Thomas .

National Servicemen's Association memorial unveiled at Keswick

National Servicemen's Association SA patron Bill Denny and state vice president Barry Presgrave with the new memorial. Picture: Tom Huntley .



While National Service conscription was unpopular when it was in place from 1951 to 1959 and 1965 to 1972, Mr Presgrave and national president Earle Jennings called for it to be brought back.

"Australia needs young people in the Defence Force – they're having trouble recruiting them now," Mr Presgrave said.

"We believe it will give young people some meaning in life, leadership and, as it did with us, you go from a boy to a man overnight."

The memorial was officially opened by Governor Hieu Van Le, who fled Vietnam as a refugee after the war.

"I'm grateful to have the opportunity to personally express my gratitude and honour those so many men and women who served our nation in conflicts," Mr Le said.