

**A STATEMENT FROM SENATOR THE HON. MICHAEL RONALDSON MINISTER FOR VETERANS' AFFAIRS MINISTER ASSISTING THE PRIME MINISTER FOR THE CENTENARY OF ANZAC SPECIAL MINISTER OF STATE**

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STATEMENT ON VIETNAM

Monday, 25 May 2015. Today marks 50 years since Australian Combat Forces arrived in South Vietnam.

While the major commemorative service for the Vietnam War will be held next year on the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan, I encourage all Australian's to remember those who served our country during the Vietnam War.

Australia deployed more than 60,000 servicemen and women to the conflict in Vietnam between 1962 and 1975, 521 of them made the supreme sacrifice.

All of our Vietnam veterans served their nation at their nation's request. In the past, we have not properly recognised their service and sacrifice. In the Centenary of Anzac, honouring a century of service, it is right and proper that we honour these men and women who upheld the finest of the ANZAC tradition.

In 2016, the Australian Government will undertake a range of commemorative activities and initiatives to recognise Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War.

As announced by the Prime Minister and myself, we will offer the families of those Vietnam Veterans buried at the Terendak Military Cemetery in Malaysia the chance to bring them home. The repatriation will take place in June 2016.

A key focus of the Australian Government's Saluting their Service grants in 2015-16 will be to recognise the service and sacrifice of Australia's servicemen and women in the Vietnam conflict.

Subject to agreement with the Vietnamese Government, the Department of Veterans' Affairs will organise a small veteran's mission to Vietnam in August 2016 to commemorate the shared sacrifice of both nations. A national commemorative service is being planned for August 2016, in collaboration with the Vietnam Veteran community, at the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial on Anzac Parade in Canberra, a memorial dedicated to Australians who served, suffered and died in the Vietnam War.

We honour our Vietnam Veterans, and their families. We acknowledge that our nation has, in the past, not appropriately recognised their service and sacrifice. As we mark our century of service, the Australian Government is determined to ensure that we do not repeat the mistakes of the past and honour those who have served their nation.