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Note to Journalists: It's a National disgrace that 'the powers that be' continue to neglect giving our returned war heroes the full recognition they deserve. This shame is worthy of wide exposure to the general public. My book HOW TO RESEARCH AND HONOUR OUR RETURNED WAR HEROES details why this shame exists and what can be done to correct this wrong. Despite two previous press releases not one investigative journalist or media outlet has taken up this story. If you truly mean it when you repeat the words 'We will remember them' and 'Lest we forget' this story is worthy of your further investigation. I appreciate that this is a lengthy article but it is necessary for you to understand why various authorities have many questions to answer. I'll be happy to post you a copy of my book by contacting me on buzz1@southernphone.com.au or you can give me a call on (02) 6355 5546 or 0428 363 385.

PRESS RELEASE: Millions of Australians have not had their returned Defence Force ancestors' service adequately recognised.

By Ian D. Burrett JP

As tragic as death is, death is final. Families have the opportunity of rebuilding their lives. Because of years of debilitating physical and emotional problems many of our returned war heroes, and their families, suffered more than those that died during a war or conflict, or shortly afterwards. As such, they deserve to be named and honoured on local war memorials along with those that died. The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA), the Australian War Memorial (AWM) and The Returned Services League (RSL) have all neglected to give our returned service people the full recognition they deserve.

My book, **HOW TO RESEARCH AND HONOUR OUR RETURNED WAR HEROES**, details why the 'powers that be' have failed and what can be done to correct this wrong. It is virtually the first and only text book to cover the topics mentioned. As well as assisting community researchers ancestors, historians and students will also learn and benefit from its contents.

Dr Brendan Nelson AO, the Director of the Australian War Memorial 2012-19 made the following comments about the book, "*One person with conviction and vision can change the world. Ian Burrett is one such man. Imbued with the qualities of his decorated father who served and fought for Australia in World War One, Ian's determination to find and recognise all those men and women who have served on our nation's memorials is the stuff of legend.*"

Hundreds of thousands of our returned war heroes have not been named on community war memorials. Why? The book answers this question and details how to rectify this. The book is a result of lessons learnt when I spent over 1500 hours producing 500 pages of research relating to Lithgow & District people who served in world war one. This resulted in a plaque naming an additional 762 Lithgow township people who served in WWI being unveiled at Queen Elizabeth Park, Lithgow on 11 November 2018. The names included an additional 72 people who died during the war and were not named on the original WWI Cenotaph, erected October 1918, which named 131 people who died.

Without any guidelines I had to engage in a steep learning curve which included countless letters, emails and phone calls to the DVA, AWM, RSL, National Archives of Australia (NAA), the Australia Local Government Association (ALGA) and the Lithgow City Council and RSL sub-Branch. The book details how to navigate the various service person websites of the NAA, DVA and AWM with handy hints on how to do so. The major problem I faced was that neither DVA, NAA, AWM or the RSL has published any guidelines to assist communities on how to identify local people who should be named on their war memorials.

Their information relates to researching individuals; not communities wanting to research many names. Without guidelines many communities have put this task in the 'too hard basket'. In addition to updating community war memorials there are numerous other ways in which our returned war heroes can gain greater recognition. I wrote to the DVA, AWM, RSL, the NAA and the ALGA requesting that they combine their resources and expertise to establish an Office to Honour Returned Service People (or a similar name) as part of the DVA. My book can be regarded as a first draft of what they could produce. Whilst the DVA replied congratulating me on my book and stated it was 'a valuable edition' to other research resources they also stated 'At this time, there are no plans ... to establish an additional office.'

My mother was born on 11 November 1915 whilst my father, 568 Lt Col Athol Frederick (Joe) Burrett DSO, was fighting at Gallipoli. Dad, who is my inspiration for the book, was 51 when I was born. He landed at Anzac Cove on 25 April 1915 as a 20 year old Sergeant with the 3rd Battalion 1st AIF. Two days later he received a bullet through his upper left arm. After recovering he gained a commission. As a 2nd Lieutenant, he was one of the officers to blow a whistle to commence the charge at Lone Pine on 6 August 1915. In this battle he was the platoon commander, and in the same trench, when John Patrick (Jack) Hamilton won the VC. Dad was promoted to Major and 2IC of the battalion on 2 December 1916 aged 22 years 4 months. Of the 12000 Aussies who landed at Gallipoli on 25 & 26 April 1915 he was one of less than 300 to be still fighting when WWI ended. He commanded the battalion on numerous occasions during 1917-18 including its last battle at Hargicourt in France during October 1918.

I was at Gallipoli on 6 August 2015 for the 100th Centenary of the Lone Pine battle. After laying the last wreath I was given the honour of closing the service by blowing a replica of the whistle that Dad blew to lead the charge almost exactly 100 years previously. I could not prevent shedding tears. I served with HQ Battery, 4th Field Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery as a Gunner Clerk in Vietnam 1967-68. I'm the treasurer of the Portland NSW RSL sub-Branch. My NSW car number plates read LESTWF.

A major way of identifying people from a certain locality is to enter Place Search into the service person data bases established by the NAA, the DVA and the AWM. For WWI the Place of Birth and Place of Enlistment can be ascertained. Place where living at the time of enlistment is not shown but may be found by searching the AWM Embarkation Rolls, individual NAA digitised service records and records found in newspapers of the time, local libraries and other local sources. In respect to WWII place where living at the time of enlistment can also be ascertained from the DVA WWII nominal rolls; not in the NAA WWII data base. Individual digitised service records for a vast majority of people who served in the two world wars can be found on the NAA data bases. Only basic information is shown on other nominal rolls for other conflicts and it is not possible to identify people through Place Search. Therefore, my book concentrates on identifying people who served in the two world wars.

Another reason why my book concentrates on those who served in WWI and WWII is that the scale of sacrifice and suffering was considerably magnified. 98.4% of the nearly 103,000 named on the AWM Roll of Honour relate to the two world wars. In WWI, 1 in every 5.4 of those who served overseas died during the war, in WWII the ratio was 1 in every 14.5, in Korea 1 in 52.9, in Vietnam 1 in 115.6 and in Afghanistan 1 in 959. Just one example of the extent of sacrifice and suffering is the battle of Lone Pine. Between 6–9 August 1915, 800 Aussies were killed and 1400 wounded. In his diary, in respect to 12 August, Dad described the appalling condition of the trenches 'Dead are lying on top of each other – fifty-seven of them in one small section of the trench.

They had been dead for four or five days; we had to walk over them. I was sick and so were the men.' In respect to August 10th Lance Corporal Cyril Lawrence recalled, 'The dead were still in these trenches and as you stood on them in the dark, perhaps half a cheek would attach itself to your boot or you would tread on his stomach and his inside just squeezes out of his mouth'.

To assist community researchers of the future the NAA, DVA and the AWM should be encouraged to include Place of Birth, Place of Enlistment and Place of Living at the time of enlistment on future data bases they establish as well as updating current data bases. The DVA WWII nominal roll sets the standard for what I would like to see for all conflicts. As it is, there is no way of ascertaining people who served in more recent conflicts who were living in certain localities at the time of enlistment or are now living at that locality. This means that people who served in more recent conflicts are less likely to be named on community war memorials. The RSL, and other Ex-Service Organisations (ESOs), are derelict in not pursuing this. However, I do congratulate them on what they're doing to provide well deserved assistance to returned service people still alive and those still serving. A sample of other suggestions in my book to give our returned heroes greater recognition follow:

Change the Ode. The Ode is the fourth stanza in the poem 'For the Fallen' written by Laurence Binyon and was first published in the London Times in September 1914 (7 months before Gallipoli!). It specifically relates to British soldiers who had died in WWI. It has since been adapted to cover all Aussies who died in conflicts. In no way does it recognise those who returned. For the same reasons why I believe that returned people should be named on local memorials I strongly believe that The Ode should be changed to acknowledge them. The Ode is recited at most funerals for returned service people. In most cases, people being farewelled had grown old and age had probably wearied them.

I believe The Ode should be amended with wording similar to the following:

*To those who died in war, we will always say,
They shall grow not old, as we who are left grow old;
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
And to those who returned and served and have since passed away
We also honour their service today.
To those that died, returned and served,
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.
Lest we forget.*

As it is, we may as well be saying:

*It doesn't matter that we have spurned
All the brave people who returned.
Let us forget.*

Changing The Ode will enable many more Aussies to personally connect with it. I appreciate that The Ode is probably subject to copyright but I believe such problems could be overcome. The word 'young' was changed to 'one' in our National Anthem!

Wearing of Medals. When service people march at commemorative services do they do so to say 'Hey – look at me' or to remember their mates and everyone who has served? If applicable, I believe that they should also wear the medals of their deceased ancestors. If they do not possess the original medals they can purchase replicas. There are strict protocols for which descendants are entitled to wear original medals but there are no rules for the wearing of replicas except that ancestor's medals must be worn over the right breast. The father of the outgoing RSL NSW President, Ray James OAM, served in WWII on the Kokoda Track. Ray could have been setting an example by also wearing his father's medals at commemorative and other services. Despite my request, relayed to his secretary, he neglects to do so. The RSL could be doing a lot more to encourage descendants to wear their ancestors' medals (or replicas) at commemorative services and inviting ancestors wearing medals to join past and present service people in commemorative marches.

Suicide. It's too late to give our world war veterans the assistance now available to past and serving members. I applaud the current Royal Commission into service-related suicide but what about those world war veterans who suffered the same fate? Over 60,000 Aussies were killed in WWI. Nick Fletcher, at the AWM, informed me that at least 50,000, maybe 60,000 or more, died within ten years of their return. Most were aged in their 20s and 30s. Upon their return it was definitely the case that the man was the breadwinner and that a woman's place was in the home. How would the men have felt, because of lingering physical and emotional problems, that they could not fulfil their manly role? Many committed suicide.

The best thing that can be done to acknowledge that we failed to adequately assist our WWI and WWII survivors, with respect to physical and especially mental illness, is for 'the powers that be' to compensate our returned heroes by pulling out all stops to have their suffering and service

recognised by getting them all named and honoured on local war memorials. The same applies to survivors from all other conflicts. If this was done, otherwise unidentified people who committed service-related suicide, together with first nation's people, would be included.

RSL Affiliate Membership. It's a sad fact that the number of RSL sub-Branches is increasingly dwindling. Committee executives in many sub-Branches comprise of Vietnam vets. Most of these are nearing, or over, 80 years of age. Who's going to replace them? The RSL is concentrating on endeavouring to attract returned service people from more recent conflicts and those still serving to replace dwindling Service Members. It is having some success in this regard, mainly concentrated in areas close to military establishments. In a desperate attempt to attract these people RSL NSW ceased charging a fee to become an RSL member.

Whilst the RSL has increased the quantity of new members what about the quality of those they attract? Most current sub-Branch committee members, including myself, waited until later in life to take of these positions. New members will likely be no different. Being young, they are more interested in their jobs, raising families, sport and study. I hope I'm wrong but I believe a majority of new members are mainly interested in what the RSL can do for them; not what they can do for the RSL. Here I'm referring to taking on committee positions and the task of keeping 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive within their communities. I believe it will be many years before sufficient new members take on constructive roles within sub-Branches to replace those currently serving.

If younger Service Members are not taking on sub-Branch management positions who's going to fill the gap until they become older?

Another aspect to consider is that I feel that the RSL in NSW, and probably the RSL throughout Australia, have concluded that the number of sub-Branches folding will continue to increase. Proof of this is evidenced by the fact that RSL NSW is seriously considering reducing the number of District Councils. This is because many of the current District Councils are becoming less active because of the decrease in the number of sub-Branches and also, because age has wearied them, not many current Serving Members are willing to take on District Council positions.

The future of the RSL in maintaining a presence in many communities, particularly the smaller ones, is indeed bleak. To correct this, I feel that the RSL needs a major change in orientation. They need to realise that the major function of many sub-Branches is centred around keeping 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive within their communities; not just concentrating on providing welfare benefits and other assistance.

To keep sub-Branches alive, particularly in smaller communities, the RSL should actively promote attracting Affiliate Members. An Affiliate Member is generally a person who is a relative of a person (living or deceased) who is or was eligible to be a Service or Life Member of the League, or people who are deemed by a sub-Branch committee to have provided significant service to the sub-Branch and supports the objects of the RSL.

Amongst the millions of Aussies who have ancestors who served there would be a significant number with desirable skills and experience who would regard joining a sub-Branch as a means of honouring their ancestors and those like them. The RSL should mount a media campaign honestly pointing out the reduction of Service Members threatens the survival of a number of sub-Branches

and that Affiliate Members would be very welcome. Each State and Territory RSL has different attitudes as to attracting Affiliate Members. For those that encourage Affiliate membership most do not permit Affiliate Members to take on the role of President or Vice-President and to represent the sub-Branch at State and Territory and National conferences. For the RSL to recognise that they also serve communities they should permit Affiliate Members to be elected as President or Vice-President IF no Service Members are able to take on these roles. By sticking to a predominantly Mates for Mates attitude they are ignoring a strong supporter base that will enable them to survive.

Conclusion

When you repeat the words 'We will remember them' and 'Lest we forget' are you also thinking about people you know, or knew, who returned; not just those that died? If you also think about those who returned you will support my campaign to give them greater recognition and to help keep 'The Spirit of Anzac' alive within communities. Civic pride is a cornerstone to the success of all tiers of government. Supporting my campaign will enhance civic pride throughout Australia. This article summarises some of the points made in my book. To get the full picture please purchase a signed copy through the book website www.howtoresearchwarheroes.com or directly from me by email at buzz1@southernphone.com.au. Whilst purchasing a copy will help me recover some of my costs, more importantly, it will help give our returned heroes the recognition they deserve. The purchase price is \$39.99 plus \$10 postage. I thank you for tasking the time to read and consider the arguments raised in this article. We will remember them **all**.
