

11th Intake National Service

To every person who has served this country in uniform, I thank you for your service.

Introduce myself as an original fellow national serviceman. Called up in 1965 I entered the 2nd Intake 1/66 in Jan 1966 and entered 'kicking and screaming'. I tried to fail the medical, drink scotch they said, eat toothpaste they said, pretend you can't read the eye chart they said – Doctor advised me that he had watched me play rugby league recently and thought that I was very fit so he wouldn't need to examine me – 'you will enjoy it he said'.

I went to 3TB at Singleton (Oxley's Lions I think we were called) couldn't stand being yelled at each day and the flies were as big as rats I so decided to apply for a commission – I had seen these dapper little men walking around with peaked caps and seemingly carrying nothing more than a clip board so I thought "that's for me' it will get me out of this shithole – was sent to OTU at Scheyville and immediately thought I had made a very bad mistake – there was more yelling, more running and even more flies than Singleton however got through that six months and served a year with 1RAR and a year with the School of Infantry and was posted to 9RAR –

I extended my National Service to complete this adventure and went to Vietnam – interesting with the battalion being 60% National Service I was the only National Service Officer on board the Sydney when it sailed out of Adelaide Harbour – 9RAR was also the time that I met many of those from 11th Intake with whom I became lifelong friends, these included Garry Mayer, Dan Penman, Doug McGrath, John Retschlag and Darryl Menzies (who I communicate with most weeks), Lou Hyland, Russ McGowan, Peter Nummy and Peter Dunstan (though not 11th Intake) – quite sadly I also knew Tommy Meredith, Reggie Phillips and Peter Smith all who were killed in action and Trevor Black was in my platoon and was killed within about 20 feet of where I stood

I later signed on full time.

Enough about me now about you.

The first national service ballot was held on 10th March 1965. It was the same date in history that, in **1806** Napoleon Bonaparte ordered navigator Matthew Flinders' release after six years' detention in Mauritius; he had called there on his way from Australia (after circumnavigating Tasmania) to England, unaware war had resumed with France

There were many misconceptions held that NS was started to provide soldiers for the war in Vietnam but that was fallacious. Cabinet took the decision to commence NS in 1964 before any commitment was made to Vietnam – NS was designed to combat 'aggressive communist developments in Asia' and in fact it wasn't until 1966 that NS were legislated to fight in units in Vietnam – initially NS were to swell the troops on the home front whilst regulars were engaged overseas.

The Training Team who first entered the war in 1962 did not employ NS. 1RAR and attachments who were the first to tour Vietnam did not have national servicemen with them although it is understood that some may have been included as reinforcements late in the tour.

Many of you would be unaware that many of our NS brothers served in Malaya, many of our school teachers served exclusively in New Guinea, in fact they have produced a book reflecting their experiences, some served in Thailand which were mainly MPs and at that same time many of our Army Duck mechanics were sent to

Antarctica to accompany the resupply ships on the icebreakers and of course, quite a number served here in Australia for the duration of their service

There were 2 call-ups each year initially consisting of 81 birth dates but later increasing in 1968 to 84 to make allowances for all those who deferred, resisted, hid, fled, joined the Ares, got married etc and allowing the Army to build to the 37,500 they were seeking.

There is a conspiracy theory, as you would expect, by a person by the name of Mick McCormick who later made a very good point. Good enough for some of you to feel 'duded. The theory is that the ballot officials put a marble in for February 29 into every year's ballot, this made the ballot year 366 days long instead of the non-leap year length of 365, and it pushed up all calendar dates — as they related to the marble numbers — by one, in non leap years

The extra marble should have been included only for leap years (i.e. 1968 and 1972 in the ballot period).

Thus when marble number 254 (which was Mick McCormick's) was drawn, it was actually out by a day and was recorded as September 10 which was Mick's birth date. The same argument was used by Normie Rowe also unsuccessfully.

McCormick has copies of the national ballot draws to back his argument. He believes the insertion of the extra leap-year marble would have fundamentally altered the rational basis of the whole national service ballot process.

No mention of an added marble is in the official record.

Max Harris of Murwillumbah had no chance his number actually was drawn on three successive occasions (three successive years). He served twelve months in Malaysia

Over 800,000 registered for National Service. Over 63,000 men were conscripted. No women. More than 19,000 Nashos served during the Vietnam War. 210 were killed and over 1200 wounded. What an incredible contribution to the war effort

A Few Statistics

Between 1964 and 1972, 804 286 twenty-year-olds registered for national service and 63 735 national servicemen served in the Army. Balloted out: 567, 238

- Granted indefinite deferment: 566 513
- Awaiting 'next' ballot: 725
- Exemptions: 3563

Theological students, ministers of religion and members of religious orders: 553

Physical or mental disabilities: 1768 (including flat feet)

Conscientious objection determined by a court: 1242

Married before the date of call-up: 20 502

Members of the Citizen Forces: 7197

Citizen Forces whose obligations completed: 7849

Death subsequent to registration: 916

Served or serving in Permanent Forces: 2194

Rejected as not meeting the medical, psychological and educational standards required by the Army: 99 010

Imprisoned for refusal to obey a call-up notice: 14

Unavailable for call-up as at 31 December 1972: 21 876

Granted or seeking deferment on grounds of exceptional hardship: 470

National servicemen received the same pay and service benefits as Regular Army volunteers. Naturally, the Army provided free meals, accommodation, uniforms and work clothes, and medical, dental and hospital treatment. Unmarried soldiers of private rank were paid \$34.16 a week in 1966, married privates \$45.71. Extra pay margins were awarded if soldiers qualified at trade courses conducted at Army schools and were employed in that trade in their units.

An additional combat allowance was awarded during service overseas. My pay book reflects 68c a day for this – veterans in Timor attracted \$69 per day and just over twice that for service in Afghanistan – unless you were in Special Forces which attracted an even higher loading. After a year of service in Vietnam I saved only enough to put a deposit on a block of land on return – three x four month tours of Afghanistan provided enough for a strong deposit on a good house. I would like to think that our efforts resulted in a better reward for our successors.

This period was an interesting and many would say an exciting time in Australian history. We made history – not everyone wanted to hear about it at the time but everyone had an opinion on it, well informed or not. This period reshaped your life, some for the better, some not so – no one who goes to war returns unchanged. Many who did not see overseas service saw their jobs disappearing, their conditions being eroded or their farms needing their watchful eye thereforeI reinforce my point all National Servicemen and their wives made a significant contribution to what the Government determined to be 'a need to harness the menace in South East Asia'.

Everyone of you should stand proud, every one you made a contribution in a different way – none of you should feel that you didn't earn the trappings that came from conscription, I will guarantee that none of you didn't make a new friend and in most cases many new friends – thank you for attending today, thank you for your service and thank you for coming to Kingscliff