

# Friends of the Avenue Newsletter

September 2014

## Message from the President ~ Ray Byrnes



Hi Friends,

### President's Annual Report 2013-14

The Official Opening of the Afghanistan Avenue of Honour at Tinaburra on 22 June 2013 by Defence Force Chief, General David Hurley in the presence of the Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition, other senior Government and Defence representatives and more than 5000 people marked the beginning of another chapter in the rich military history of the Atherton Tablelands.

Much credit is due to the small band of people whose vision, drive and hard work brought this project from concept to reality. The idea for the Avenue, floated by John Hardy in his Anzac Day speech at Yungaburra in 2012, proved to be the catalyst for Gordon and Susan Chuck to begin the push for the creation of the Avenue as a National Memorial to honour all those who have paid the supreme sacrifice in the Afghanistan Campaign.

Yungaburra Business Association representatives Peter Williams, Kerry Kehoe, Mike Williams and Annie Cork; Tableland Regional Council representatives Councillors Shaaron Linwood and Rod Marti, Dean Davidson, Shane Bisseker and Mac Macaul, as well as the wider Far North community deserve special mention for their contributions to the success of the project. It should also be acknowledged that there were numerous business owners, both locally and further afield, who provided very generous inkind contributions to the construction of the Avenue.

In July 2013, a Steering Committee was formed to take over responsibilities for management of the Avenue of Honour and the associated activities and events taking place at the site. The Steering Committee prepared an application for transition to an Incorporated Association and on 17 September the inaugural meeting of the newly Incorporated Association was held.

Since its opening, the Avenue has attracted an increasing number of visitors which has included many organised tour groups, veteran motorcycle clubs, serving and retired Defence personnel and their families and friends, tourists from all parts of Australia and quite a number from overseas. Numerous favourable comments received and the continuing donations, either in the collection box or in the mail, are indicators of the positive visitor response to the Avenue and the atmosphere it creates.



Craig Reedman & Ray Byrnes speaking at the Red Hat Ladies Tour

During the year our Association has fostered a number of significant events at the Avenue including the 2013 Remembrance Day Ceremony, the Anzac Day Dawn Service which was attended by an estimated 700 people and the Governor-General's visit in May. The Anzac Day Dawn Service and Remembrance Day ceremonies will become permanent parts of the Avenue's events calendar in future years.

Our 'Friends of the Avenue' group continues to grow and at last count was approaching the 400 mark. Our 'Friends' consist of a large number of military and ex-military personnel and their families from all over Australia. We are able to keep them informed of what is happening with the Avenue via quarterly newsletters, emails advising of upcoming events and we make regular contributions in the Cairns RSL Sub-Branch 'Sit-Rep' newsletters. The brochure continues to be popular with 10,000 copies recently being reproduced.

While the majority of these supporters reside outside the local area, a much smaller group of locals provide the 'hands on' input that is required to keep the Avenue in pristine condition and befitting its status as a National Memorial. These are the people who roll up each day to raise and lower the flags, are involved with the Thursday mini working bees, who participate in our periodic larger working bees and who attend to the myriad of tasks not covered by our paid maintenance contractor. It is thanks to these people, especially Hugh and Marion Watson, Ken Cork, Terry Twomey, Lyle Wakeling, Tim Webster-Young, Michael Cole-King and Kerry Diezmann that we are able to keep our maintenance costs at a sustainable level.



L-R: Kerry Diezmann, Ray Byrnes & Ken Cork at a working bee

Fundraising activities are an important part of the Association's responsibilities and we have received substantial support from several events including the Anzac Ball at Mareeba RSL in April, the Black Tie Dinner Dance at the Malanda RSL in June and the Patriots Australia (Cairns Chapter) Charity Ride & Service which was held in late June. Special thanks are due to Craig and Barbi Reedman, Tracey O'Shea, Kay Maloney and Kurt (Coops) Cooper for their respective roles in organising these events. I would also like to thank John Hardy and Terry Edmondson for doing a great job with raising funds for the Avenue via merchandising, as well as to Cairns Post for their highly successful fundraising campaign leading up to the Official Opening and to the NQ NRL for their raffle donation of a signed Maroon's jersey to raffle.



L-R: Marion Watson & Terry Edmondson at Yungaburra Markets

The Cairns RSL Sub-Branch continues to be a major supporter of the Avenue and we are grateful for the generous financial contributions, wise counsel and moral support which the members of this Sub-Branch have provided during the year. Our special thanks go to President David Clifton, Secretary Lyn Warwick and 51 FNQR Honorary Colonel Kel Ryan who have been instrumental in galvanising support for the Avenue. The Association has also greatly appreciated the participation at various ceremonies and ongoing support from Brigadier Roger Noble, Commander of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, 1RAR and the 5<sup>th</sup> Aviation Regiment at Lavarack Barracks (Townsville), as well as from the 51<sup>st</sup> Battalion (Cairns) and HMAS Cairns.



With regard to further developments, we anticipate that we will negotiate a lease for the Avenue site with the Tablelands Regional Council after the Council finalises its Master Plan for the Tinaburra Peninsula. One project is a proposal for an Interpretative Precinct which has been suggested for a site adjacent to the entrance to the Avenue; however, this has been put on hold pending clarification of some elements and lack of consensus on the form it should take. Even if this proposal is eventually approved, construction would be delayed until the Tinaburra Peninsula Development Plan has been completed and the lease for the site has been signed.

My job as President has been made easier by having wonderful support from my Executive Committee members, Secretary Annie Cork and Treasurer David Osborne, as well as from all other members of the Association. I thank each and every one for their support and assistance during the year and I believe we can all feel proud about what has been achieved. I look forward to this Association's continuing success in the year ahead and especially with the contributions being made by our Afghanistan Veterans.



## *Patriots Australia (Cairns Chapter) Charity Run & Service* *Kurt (Coops) Cooper ~ President*

On behalf of the Cairns Chapter, Patriots Australia, we would like to thank all of your members and community of dedicated volunteers associated to Afghanistan Avenue of Honour memorial whose generous support and assistance allowed our club to successfully set in motion the annual Motorcycle Charity Ride.

We appreciatively acknowledge the support of the Yungaburra Lions Club who responded to our call for assistance and provided us with the vital equipment to keep beers cold and tummies fed.

A very special thanks to Annie Cork whose tireless energy provided us with continuous support and logistics, regardless of her personal or work commitments and, without question, was the integral link ensuring the triumph of this entire event. *Thanks Annie.*



Coops with Navy Chaplain Ian Lindsay



L-R: Ray Byrnes & Mark Proud

As serving and ex-serving members of the Australian Defence Force we are very proud to be involved in this very significant memorial and look forward to supporting the Afghanistan Avenue of Honour into the future.



Coops presenting the Patriot's cheque to AAHA President Ray Byrnes



The first of the bikers arriving at the Avenue

Over 100 current and former Australian Defence Force soldiers, sailors and airmen, together with many others, participated in this event, to honour their colleagues who have been killed in Afghanistan. Together with others bikers from various other motor cycle groups, local Tablelander bikers and several members of our Association, there were more than 120 bikers who participated in the Charity Ride & Service.

The AAHA would like to extend a huge thank-you and appreciation to Coops and the Patriots for organising such a fantastic event, which raised a very impressive \$3,570 to help us with maintaining the Avenue. Well done guys, you should be proud of your achievements and we are looking forward to this being an annual event.



John Wright 'triking' Terry Edmondson & John Hardy

## *News from the Families of the Fallen Group*

### *~ Pam Palmer*



#### **Families of the Fallen Weekend**

Last year we started the inaugural 'Families of the Fallen Weekend' which was held in Brisbane. Sixteen families flew in from various parts of Australia and we certainly had a wonderful time. This weekend is especially held in September, due to the fact that it is the only month of the year that we have not lost a lad while on deployment.

The weekend commenced with a Meet & Greet on the Friday night, which was attended by most of us. We had a special guest, Jason Swaine from the Australian Artist, who arrived with a painting of all of the young Fallen Diggers and he surprised Ray and I with a lovely portrait of our son, Scott.

On the Saturday we chose to have a free day and most of us sat and watched the ALF Grand Final, where we laughed and cheered the teams on and remembered how our boys did the same thing at certain times of their lives. This is the main purpose of these weekends, so that we can come together with like-minded people and share and remember our boys with each other, knowing that we are all feeling the same loss and pain.



A Families of the Fallen Dinner was held that night and what a delightful evening it was, with the then Governor-General Dame Quentin Bryce in attendance. The families had a great evening with

singing, dancing and enjoying the fireworks display. The Governor-General was so pleased that we had put the fireworks on for her, laughing along with us, even though it was not planned at all. Sunday, with some heavy heads, we did a luncheon on a cruise down the Brisbane River, which certainly made the end of the weekend just fantastic.



#### **Kokoda Trail Walk**



The whole initiative of the Kokoda Trail Walks was instigated by Brian Freeman and he has made quite a few tracks across the Kokoda Trail. As well, it was actually Brian Freeman who started Mates 4 Mates which is now off and running.

The story behind how we became involved with the Kokoda Trail Walk was when Ray, a parent of a Fallen Digger, was asked to join a group to go along on the journey and walk with young wounded soldiers. This included Damien Thomlinson who had lost both his legs while in Afghanistan and

he was with our son Scott, who was the first to get to Damien and give him First Aid. So, this is why Damien went along with Ray and naturally a special bond formed between them. Also on this trip were young soldiers from Brisbane who had recently lost two of their mates through an IED explosion. When speaking with these young soldiers, Ray found out they had been clearing the way for Scott's Unit.



When Ray got back and I saw the positive change in him, I asked him if he could mention to Brian to allow Families of the Fallen to also be given the opportunity of going on these trips. Then it started, with Brian being approached by the RSL Queensland, who became a sponsor and it became a huge success. Brian then focused on starting this new program and he asked Ray and I to become on board, which we gladly did. In fact, we did not hesitate at all because this was such a wonderful program for both the families and soldiers.

However, due to some very disappointing decisions being made that were out of our control, subsequently resulting in Brian not being permitted to continue with running this project and families not being allowed to participate, Ray approached some of the Families to start a new program. He, along with these parents, decided they could not give up on such a wonderful project, so that is why we all got involved. We are not an official organisation - we are just a group of families who passionately believe that getting young soldiers on the Kokoda Trail, together with families, is a wonderful and highly beneficial program. Due to us being unable to provide this opportunity to soldiers while they are still serving in the Defence Force, we wait until such time as they are out of the service to offer to send them on this trip.

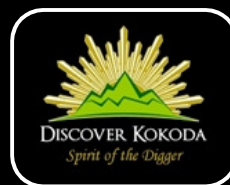


In collaboration with others, Ray has done an enormous amount of fundraising to be able to get the new program started.....and so far, so good! We very much believe in this project and we are appreciative of the assistance from others, inclusive of the endless support provided by the Patriots Australia (Northern Territory Chapter).

Ray has taken on the position of Vice President of the Vietnam Veterans here in Darwin and he strongly believes that our next generation of Australian Veterans, who are coming home to their families, are suffering in one way or another.

It is not only the great passion and respect that we have for our servicemen and woman, but for the families that are also suffering and hurting deeply.

## *Trek the Kokoda Track with Discover Kokoda ~ in the spirit of the Digger*



Ollie Fowler

The team at Discover Kokoda has the right mix of skills and experience to ensure that every aspect of your trek has an expert planning and managing it from the time of your booking until you arrive safely back in Australia. Trained and experienced as Fire Fighters, with backgrounds in the SAS regiment and rehab of Veterans, our team is completed by a personal trainer and our PNG head guide who has been walking the track with trekkers since 2001.



Jason Kutchel

Our tours are competitively priced and we offer an interest free monthly payment option which includes everything you need to experience and understand the history, the natural environment and to facilitate interaction with the local culture. We have a trekking experience for every budget and timeframe. So, if you're thinking of taking on the challenge of Kokoda go with a company that understands the military background and local culture. Let us help you.....*Discover Kokoda*.

<http://www.discoverkokoda.com.au/> or find us on Facebook  
<https://www.facebook.com/DiscoverKokoda?ref=hl>

# Black Tie Dinner Dance - Malanda RSL



Many thanks to Kay Maloney, a good night was certainly had by all at the Black Tie Dinner Dance held at Malanda RSL. These pictures convey a thousand words!



L-R: Kel Ryan, David Clifton, Craig Reedman & Mex Cernez



Fiona Anderson & Stuart Cummings



Ray Byrnes and Yolande Entsch congratulating Councillor Rod Marti on being the winner of the 2013 signed Maroon's Jersey



L-R: Barbi Reedman, Junko Marti & Fiona Anderson



Kiara & Anne English



David & Majella Osborne



# Rocky Creek 69<sup>th</sup> VP Day



L-R: Councillor Marjorie Pagani, Bishop Tony & Valerie Hall-Matthews, Liz Schmidt & Ray Byrnes

The 'meet and greet', held on the previous day and hosted by Councillor Pagani, was well attended by families of departed military members who were being honoured with plaques. Many veterans return each year, including 95 year-old Ravenshoe Veteran Bud Palmer, a Rat of Tobruk, who was a guest speaker. The contingent from 2/25 and 2/31 Battalions Association returned again from Citroia and the RAAF Association (Cairns Branch) were represented in great numbers. They have never missed a VP service at Rocky Creek!

Keynote speaker was Lt Peter Gaden, OIC Health Central, HMAS Cairns, who spent both Saturday and Sunday at the site with his young family. This family was generously hosted at Allawah Retreat, compliments of Councillor Pagani.



Councillors Marjorie Pagani & Shaaron Linwood



L-R: Terry Edmondson, Bill McDonald & John Hardy

Dimbulah Australian Navy Cadet Leading Seaman Reece Fieldhouse, TS Endeavour, HMAS Cairns, was the cadet guest speaker and spoke of the honour and pride he has in being able to train and serve in the Navy. He was formerly a cadet sergeant with 106 Squadron, RAAF Mareeba.

The whole weekend event was a tremendous achievement and an enjoyable and moving experience. Congratulations and well done to Marjorie and her hard-working Committee who are anticipating that next year's event will be even bigger and better!



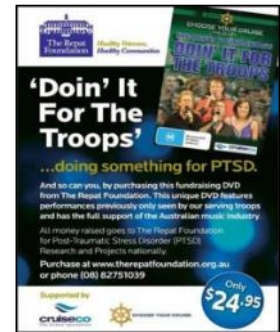
Army Cadets (Tablelands)



L-R: Tim Webster-Young & Bill McDonald

# *'Doin' it for the Troops* DVD

If you would like to help The Repat Foundation raise money for our returned Veterans, you may be interested in purchasing a copy of *'Doin' it for the Troops* DVD. It is \$24.95 plus postage, narrated by award winning artist Amber Lawrence and one hour and 39 minutes of wonderful entertainment. The DVD begins with a live-to-camera speech from General Peter Cosgrove (retired), now Governor-General of Australia. Every single cent raised goes towards helping our returned Veterans who suffer from PTSD and their families nationally. The play list has an array of artists who came on board for this project:



Shout – Kylie Minogue & John Farnham  
Shadow Boxer – performed by the late Doc Neeson  
Missing Heroes – Adam Harvey  
Jingle Bell Rock – Kylie Minogue & The Living End  
Touch – Touch – Noiseworks  
The Man Across the Street – Amber Lawrence  
I'll See Ya – Simply Bushed

Poster Girl – Beccy Cole  
By The Light of the Moon – Chelsea Basham  
Lay Down Your Guns – Jimmy Barnes  
The Anzac – Adam Brand  
Rockin' Robin – Kylie Minogue  
Battle Scars – Guy Sebastian featuring Lupe Fiasco  
Dancing With Elvis – Gina Jeffreys

And The Band Played Waltzing Matilda – Eric Bogle

I Still Call Australia Home – performed by all artists in East Timor (John Farnham, Kylie Minogue, Doc Neeson, Gina Jeffreys, James Blundell, Jack Jones, Rachel Thorne.

Diggers of the Anzac – John Williamson (this song is used as a backing song to a Montage that includes various artists who have sung to the troops overseas including Diva Demolition, Beccy Cole, Doc Neeson, John Williamson and many more)

What About Me – Shannon Noll (only part of the song – this is Channel 7 News footage of when the troops returned to Townsville in 2008)

Take a Long Line – Doc Neeson and John Farnham, Kylie Minogue, Gina Jeffreys, James Blundell, Jack Jones, Rachel Thorne

Am I Ever Gonna See Your Face Again – Doc Neeson and the others as listed above

There are also live-to-camera short speeches by Prinnie Stevens, Rear Admiral Ken Doolan (retired), Michael Chugg, Lehmo, The McClymonts and Angry Anderson.

You can contact either The Repat Foundation on 8275-1039 or go to website <https://www.therepatfoundation.org.au/doin-it-for-the-troops-dvd> to order your copy.

People can follow *'Doin' It For The Troops'* on:

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/doinitforthetroops?ref=hl#!/> and Twitter @Dvdtroops.

