



Australian Government
Department of Defence

AHQ/OUT/2015/R21674156

Mr Don Tate

Through: Defence Organisational Response Unit
R8-LG-001
Russell Offices
RUSSELL ACT 2600

Dear Mr Tate,

I appreciated the opportunity to meet with you recently in Adelaide. I felt it important I follow-up our meeting with more formal correspondence to confirm a number of the points I made during that meeting.


Most importantly I want to apologise on behalf of the Army for maladministration of your records over a number of years, starting during your service in Vietnam, but most regrettably extending long after your return home. This maladministration has resulted in you being unfairly vilified by sections of the veteran community who have used administrative gaps in your records to question your service history. These gaps in your record should not have happened in the first instance and should not have gone so long unacknowledged. I deeply regret the pain this has caused you and your family.

I was also humbled to hear your account of your medical treatment following the gunshot wound to your hip and thigh. While it is not possible to turn back the clock and relieve the pain you suffered for almost two years I can assure you we are making sure the current generation of wounded veterans is not experiencing the same conditions. I can report to you they are being treated to the best care available in Australia, including access to rehabilitation and prosthetics.

On behalf of the Army I encourage you to be proud of your service in both the 4th and 9th Battalions of the Royal Australian Regiment. The Royal Australian Regiment has earned a place of great respect both in Australia and internationally and your sacrifice as part of the Regiment stands as the equal of any other individual who survived their service. Again the failure of contemporary record keeping at the time you were wounded while fighting with the 9th Battalion is unforgivable. As I explained in our meeting we have learned a great deal from the experiences of you and your fellow soldiers who arrived in Vietnam as reinforcements but with no relationship to the units you joined. We now make very specific efforts to ensure these soldiers train with the units they are likely to join and ensure they form part of the Battalion team.

I want to also acknowledge the contribution made by you and a group of veterans made while serving in a second D&E platoon formed under the 1st Australian Task Force. While I indicated to you in our meeting that my time as a Brigade Commander leaves me able to understand why this temporary grouping may not have been formally recorded as new establishment at the time, this in no way diminishes the achievement of the men who formed the platoon. For a group of soldiers with very few NCOs and no officers to maintain cohesion in the face of significant contact with the enemy is testament to the strength of the character of those men. I am pleased to note formal recognition of the service of this group made by another distinguished veteran, The Honourable Mike Kelly, when he was assisting the Minister for Defence. I echo his affirmation of the contribution you all made.

Finally I wish you and your family well and hope you are able to use this opportunity to celebrate your service contribution and rise above the negative elements of the veterans' community.

Yours Sincerely,


FA McLachlan, AM

Major General

Head Modernisation and Strategic Planning – Army

1 April 2015