

# THE NATIONAL NEWSLETTER OF THE MIVAC TRUST



December 2008

**PATRON: SANDY MACGREGOR Col. MC (Rfd)**

*The MiVAC Trust is the initiative of Australian Vietnam Veterans who have been involved in landmine clearance in Vietnam and seen first-hand the devastation caused by these indiscriminate weapons. MiVAC is primarily a fundraising body, a voluntary organization allocating much needed funds to projects identified to MiVAC Trustees by Australian deminers, other NGO's or Federal Government agencies who are, or have been involved with de-mining, health or educational projects overseas. MiVAC is giving you the opportunity to make a difference and help us bring relief to the many people still living with the daily threat of landmine incidents. Please support the work MiVAC is involved with. Become a member of MiVAC or host your own fundraiser involving your local school, business or club.*

*For more information and details of our projects:*

[www.mivactrust.org](http://www.mivactrust.org)

## **COMING EVENTS**

### **CHRISTMAS LUNCH/GET TOGETHER**

Brookfield Vineyard, MARGATE. Tas

Sunday, 14/12/08 12 Noon

### **VIETNAM VETERANS CONCERTS & WORKSHOP**

At Harvey Dickson's Country Music Centre

Boyup Brook, W.A,

Friday, 9/1/2009 – Sunday, 11/1/2009

### **DAY OF 1000 BBQ'S**

Soundy Park, HOBART.

Sunday, 22/1/2009

### **BATTLE OF THE CHOIRS**

Brookfield Vineyard, MARGATE. Tas

Friday 6/3/2009 – Monday 9/3/2009

## **PROJECT REPORTS**

### **KAI'S VILLAGE**

Cambodia

Mike Roberts

### **KON TUM**

Vietnam

Derek Smith

### **BAN XAI**

Laos

Sandy MacGregor

Walter Kopek

### **HOUAYYEN VILLAGE**

Laos

Sandy MacGregor

Walter Kopek

**Projects completed by MiVAC this year are – Orphanage at Batticaloa SRI LANKA,**

**Water wells and toilet block for school at Teme Popoum, LAOS,**

**Self sustainable vegetable garden at Kai's Village Orphanage, CAMBODIA,**

**Bomb clearance at Xai Ban Fai District, LAOS**

## **CONTACT DETAILS:**

MIVAC TRUST NATIONAL OFFICE

Po Box 967, SANDY BAY. TAS. 7006

**Gill Paxton** – Secretary

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**Rob Woolley** - Trustee

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## MiVAC FUNDRAISING LUNCHEON AT CURRUMBIN RSL

MiVAC members and supporters from up and down the East Coast of Australia travelled to the Gold Coast for an awareness and fundraising luncheon at the Currumbin RSL on August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008. The RSL proved to be an excellent venue with the dining room decked out in MiVAC's blue and gold colours, thanks to Linda Carpenter and the staff of the RSL who went above and beyond the call of duty with many phone calls going back and forth from NSW and Tassie to help ensure that the day went well.

Normie Rowe had met with Trustees, Eva Ruzicka and Rob Woolley in Hobart earlier this year and expressed his willingness to help MiVAC, and so the idea of the Gold Coast fundraiser was born. The luncheon date coincided with the Vietnam War Exhibition at Tweed Heads and supporters who attended both events were not only given the opportunity to see the memorabilia, photographs and art display at Twin Towns RSL but also to hear, at Currumbin, a sincere and very moving personal account from Normie Rowe, who was a Crew Commander of his own APC in Vietnam, and whose Unit in Armoured Corps suffered extensively from landmines – losing 27 men – nearly all to landmines, with many more being injured.

Sandy MacGregor MC (Rfd), Patron of MiVAC, gave a DVD presentation of it's work to date, and incidentally, for those who don't know Sandy, he was awarded the Military Cross in Vietnam, where he was the first Australian Engineer (a Tunnel Rat) to go down a Viet Cong tunnel. Sandy also gives very generously of his time to MiVAC and he too had many phone calls and a trip to Tweed Heads before the event to promote and advertise the luncheon.

Another Vietnam Veteran and long time supporter of MiVAC who attended was Graham Edwards, a former MHR and ex-7RAR who lost both legs to a landmine incident in Vietnam. Graham spoke about the insidious nature of landmines and the harm they do to civilian and military populations.



*Illustration 1: Graham Edwards & Normie Rowe at the Luncheon at Currumbin RSL*

The final speaker was Michael Hayes, who has his own professional landmine and bomb disposal company (Phoenix Clearance Limited). Michael travelled to Australia from Laos, with his wife and family to attend the event and have an extended holiday on the Gold Coast. Michael spoke of MiVAC's partnership with PCL in a bomb clearance operation and of the saturation bombing in Laos during the Vietnam conflict which has made it the heaviest bombed country in the world..

While the very nature of the reason we all made the journey to the Currumbin RSL was a sobering one, our thanks and gratitude go to all our speakers, especially Normie Rowe, who hosted the event and provided entertainment with the help of his mate, Navy veteran, Ron McLaren. Their music created just the right atmosphere for the day and Normie kept the show moving with an impromptu auction of a Menu signed by special guest, Keith Payne, who was awarded the Victoria Cross for his brave actions in Vietnam. Some spirited bidding took place for the signature with Veterans Affairs Minister, Alan Griffin just gaining the final bid over Peter Campbell, who came up from Wollongong for the luncheon and exhibition.



*Illustration 2: Rob Woolley, Keith Payne and the Hon. Alan Griffin MP, Minister for Veteran Affairs at the luncheon*

It must have been the Minister's day because he also had the winning ticket for the raffle and proudly became the new owner of a Red Back Queensland State Rugby Union jumper – signed by all the players. Many thanks to Dick Venness for kindly donating the jumper and to Derek Smith who sent it on to MiVAC.

All who supported the events at Currumbin RSL and Twin Town's RSL will be pleased to know that over \$7,000 was raised to help MiVAC assist landmine survivors. Well done everyone!

Merle Woolley

### **VIETNAM WAR EXHIBITION AT TWIN TOWNS RSL**

Several members of the Trust joined forces to showcase the work carried out by the Trust at an Exhibition organized by Bob Meehan who works with the Gold Coast War Museum. Twin Towns R.S.L. provided support for our members in many ways during the Exhibition. Our sincere thanks to Bob Meehan and R.S.L. President Joe Russell.

MiVAC'S contribution to the Exhibition grew from a vision held by David Sturmer, ex RAE and Vietnam Veteran who saw action during 1969 – 1970. David had started to express his experiences by painting actions he was involved in as well as other members of his unit. David was wounded three times during his active service. From David's vision grew a display to show the public the trauma caused by the scourge of landmines.

Other contributors mostly by way of photographic images included, George Gittoes, artist and photo journalist, Donny Patterson, Humanitarian Volunteer., John Rodsted photographs on loan from Austcare, Lithographs by Tasmanian artist Alex. Thompson, Michael Hayes of Phoenix Clearance Laos, John Bygrave, MiVAC member, along with many photographs showing the work

MiVAC has achieved to date in Cambodia and Laos. We are very grateful to all contributors who so generously allowed us to display their work.



*Illustration 3: Two painting by Dave Sturmer at the Vietnam War Exhibition*



*Illustration 4: 1 Troop lines at Nui Dat - Dave Sturmer*

Justine Elliott, Federal Minister for the Aged opened the Exhibition and several other State and Federal members also attended. Without exception they were all impressed with the work MiVAC has achieved and offered any support they were able. The full Exhibition contained displays by the Gold Coast Museum, 4 RAR Assoc., The Tracker Dogs, Explosive Detection Dogs, a contingent from SME in Sydney with a large display of mines and cluster bombs, MiVAC, Department of Veterans Affairs, and even the Provos joined in. The Exhibition was open to the public and several school's brought students along following a Legacy commemorative service in the near by park, organized by Joe Russell. Legacy presented a cheque to MiVAC for \$100.00. Rob Woolley accepted the cheque on MiVAC's behalf.



*Illustration 5: Part of the exhibition at Twin Towns*



*Illustration 6: A quiet little drink after all the hard work*

The consensus was that the Exhibition had achieved what we set out to do and that was to create awareness of the horror of landmines and the work MiVAC carries out in support of the many world communities affected by them. David Sturmer and Rob Woolley are to be commended for their work in helping to realise and bring to fruition the Exhibition

Beryl Goddard

## **KAIS VILLAGE ORPHANAGE CAMBODIA**

### Water Security Project

### MiVAC Involvement

Kais Village Orphanage is located at Kilometre 86, Highway No.4, Kampong Speu Province (close to the turn-off to Kirirom National Park). This orphanage is currently home to some 60 children, including more than 20 infants under the age of one. The population may increase to a combined total of 200 plus orphans and staff over the next few years.

The Orphanage management are dedicated to make the orphanage self sufficient and to get away from the dependence of donations. A recent small rural development project began that process and work is continuing to achieve self sufficiency.



*Illustration 7: Willing workers*



*Illustration 8: Noi and Sophea - family killed by landmines*

Land resources consist of approximately 7 hectares of land (which has been converted to a Mango Orchard) with one section along side a 15 metre stretch of Highway No. 4. This is an ideal location for a coffee, handicrafts shop to further generate income for the orphanage

The most notable building infrastructure consists of: a new masonry kitchen/dining hall, a recently completed large masonry nursery two older residence homes, an open air school, a medical centre, and latrine/ablution block. These facilities all have water outlets and together amount to a significant domestic demand, which will continue to grow over the next few years.

The recent Kais Village Farm Project, which MiVAC supported with funding, has added a cattle barn, a chicken pen, vegetable garden, and pig pens. All adding to the daily water requirements that will also increase with further agricultural developments.

Due to the isolated location, the orphanage currently faces regular water shortages as there is no reliable community water supply.

Water is currently being sourced from a combination of open wells and the community water supply when operating. The open wells have been tested and shown to provide water suitable for human use, however they are in poor condition and subject to pollution from surface water inflows containing fuel spillage animal faeces and other pollutants. The community water is expensive and

a significant on going cost to the orphanage operating budget. It is of dubious quality and supply unreliable, periods of 7 days with out supply are common.

The orphanage urgently needed to develop a secure, safe and independent water supply to meet present and future demands for human domestic and agricultural use.

To ensure that Kais Village has a clean, safe, reliable and adequate water supply that meets long term demand for both human domestic and agriculture consumption all existing and alternative sources are being developed.

To achieve this, MiVAC member Mike Roberts, has designed and is supervising the construction of a system that exploits the following existing and alternative sources:

- Rain water-A large volume rain water harvest system (RHS-HV) as primary potable and domestic water supply.
- Community Water –maintain connection to community water supply as an emergency supply.
- Existing Wells -Integration of all existing suitable water sources (open wells & tube wells) via header tank and reticulated system. This would provide the agricultural supply. These sources may supplement the RHS-HV, after upgrading of the wells and with simple low tech settlement and aeration treatments and sterilization that ensure the water suitable for human use

The project therefore comprise three components as follows

### **Rainwater Harvest System-High Volume – Component 1**

There is no better cleaner, safer or more abundant water source available to the orphanage than rain water that can be harvested, and stored in large volume cement tanks. These tanks are enclosed such that they are protected from all vectors -, enclosed design makes it hard for mosquito larvae and solids to contaminate the tank; light cannot get in which prevents algae growth and reduces food supply for dangerous pathogens.

To provide an adequate supply through dry season periods large volumes must be collected and stored during the rainy season

To secure a safe reliable and adequate water supply that meets orphanage population increases as advised by orphanage management, a high volume storage rain water harvest system (RHS-HV) is being constructed.

This comprises 4 x 35m<sup>3</sup> cement water collection tanks feeding via small electric transfer pumps to header tanks that supply individual building demand.

### **Community Water Connection-Component 2**

The orphanage currently receives water from the community supply system. This water is expensive and a significant on going cost to the orphanage operating budget. It is of dubious quality and supply is unreliable due to ever increasing demand from the expanding local community. However, this source should be retained and utilized if and when required. This will be achieved by connection of the existing town supply by isolation valves to the 2500 litre header tank that serves Tank 4 this can store a volume of or be topped up from community supply as required.

### **Integratation/Upgrade of all Existing Suitable Water Sources – Component 3**

To maximize water supply and exploit all supply options during the dry season it is further proposed that all existing water (tube and open well) sources, be integrated and fed throughout the area via a reticulated piping system.

Note that none of these wells can alone provide the required volumes but collectively will meet the need for present agricultural demand, and with further simple treatments may be a dry season supplementary source to the RHS-HV.

This is to be achieved by the installation of a piping main that connects all sources and fitted with appropriate isolation valves/manifolds via a ultra violet sterilization and filter system to main storage tank and header tanks and thereby all building outlets.

This component will take some months to complete due to the sequence of construction activities/installations and hold ups due to heavy seasonal rains.



*Illustration 9: Deep Well and Shallow Well No.2*

Ultimately Kais Village Orphanage will have a safe and secure water supply.

Mike Roberts

### **MiVAC UPDATE ON VIETNAM PROJECT**

Project J216 – Kon Katu Road Repair, is gathering steam. Since the last newsletter, good progress has been made. Derek Smith visited Kon Tum in August of this year and was able to meet with a number of agencies that may be able to support the project in one form or another. They include:

Matthew Duly, Commercial Director of the Phu My Bridge Construction (BBBH Consortium),

Leigh Anderson, Executive Manager of ausCHAM Vietnam (Australian Chamber of Commerce Ho Chi Minh City),

Mme Than Xuan Vice Director Dept of Investment and Trade Promotion, Ho Chi Minh City Peoples Committee,

Mr. Nguyen Than Duoc, Director Dept of Foreign Affairs, Peoples Committee of Kon Tum 7Province,

Mr. Mal Skelly, Consul General of Australia, Ho Chi Minh City,

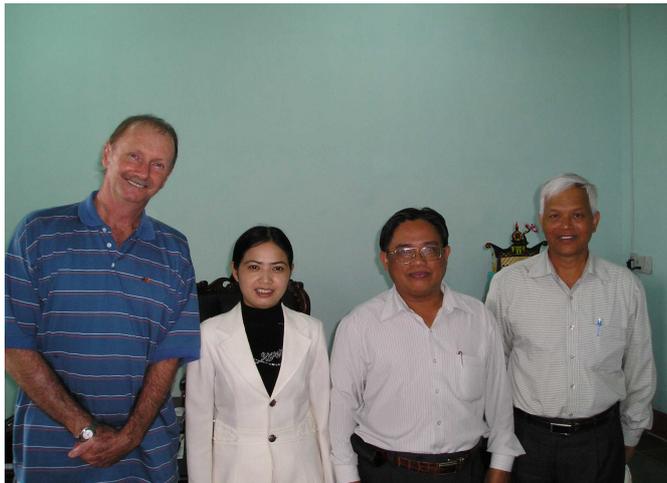
Mr. Ken Tang, Business Development Manager, GHD Pty Ltd, Ho Chi Minh City

Agreement has been reached to link with the NGO, East Meets West which is a US organisation that is operating in Vietnam and has done work in Kon Tum. They have kindly agreed to take this Project under their wing so that gives MiVAC a very strong chance of success.

Derek travelled to Brisbane and met with Ms Victoria Orpin, of Global Development Group and the person responsible for Vietnam within GDG. It is through GDG that MiVAC gains the right to offer tax deductibility to donors for such projects.

Derek is travelling back to Vietnam in March 2009, along with Dave Penson (ex RAE WO), to further advance the project. Dave in particular will be looking at the issue of clearance of the area of work. Kon Tum and the surrounding area was heavily bombed by the US during the war years. Safety is a very high priority for any MiVAC task and the area will need to be made safe prior to any construction work commencing.

So in summary, things are going well with this project. The big hurdle is getting the funding so if readers know of any corporation that may be interested in giving some financial support, please put them in contact with Derek Smith at email [dvsmith@ozemail.com.au](mailto:dvsmith@ozemail.com.au) or on phone at 07 47735104, mobile 0438 221114.



*Illustration 10: Derek meeting with the Director and Vice Director of the Peoples Committee, Kon Tum, Vietnam*

## **PROJECTS IN LAOS**

2008 saw MiVAC completing two projects in Laos.. With the help of Walter Kopek, our Laos representative, and your generous donations, we were able to provide a water well and a toilet block for a school in Teme Pomoum. You may have read Walter's account of his visit to the school in our June newsletter.

The other project in Laos at Khammouane Province involved the clearing of bombs, including cluster bombs, and thanks again to your support, MiVAC was able to partner with Mick Hayes and his company Phoenix Clearance Limited and 65 bombs were removed. Another small project completed and another small area made safer for the communities living in the vicinity..

It was a pleasure to meet with Mick during our fundraising luncheon and exhibition on the Gold Coast recently. He explained that it is an unfortunate fact that Lao PDR has the distinction of being one of the most heavily bombed places on earth, with 15 of its 18 provinces (of which two were not surveyed) showing considerable UXO contamination. According to Mick the conservative estimates are around 600,000 tons of bombs dropped on Lao during the period 1965 – 1975 and of the total figure of bombs it is estimated that up to 30% failed to detonate. This 30% or 180,000 tons still waits in the ground today, posing a mostly unseen yet very real threat to the local population and to safe community development.

It was with these figures in mind that Sandy MacGregor, his sons, Andrew and Ian, and his brother Chris, travelled to Laos in October to meet up with Walter Kopek and Mick Hayes to witness the bombing devastation and to visit the small village of Houayyen in Khammouane Province where MiVAC had paid for the clearing of surface bombs. They also examined another potential project at the same village – the demining of 90 hectares of their rice growing areas which is currently unsafe, however the farmers have no choice but to keep working this land. We hope to be able to fund this project in the future.

Since Sandy's visit, Walter has again met with Mick Hayes and has sent a proposal to the Trustees outlining a project at Ban Xai which involves the clearing of a minefield and fencing another 30+ minefields. This will ultimately benefit the people of the the district as well as protecting their livestock. MiVAC Trustees have agreed to help fund this project and we hope to start this in early 2009.



*Illustration 12: Chris, Ian, Andrew & Sandy*



*Illustration 11: Sandy MacGregor & Walter Kopek with the Village Chief at PCL*

### **MEET PAUL JEFFRESS – NSW STATE CO-ORDINATOR**

Paul Jeffress is a public accountant who lives in the lower Blue Mountains west of Sydney. After serving in the Royal Australian Navy, Paul gained several degrees including studies in development economics. He is married to Liz, a nurse manager, and has two grown daughters.

His aversion to landmines occurred when he witnessed the funeral of a young child who survived the initial explosion but whose parents had to let him die because they could not afford the \$65 to have him treated at hospital

Paul joined MiVAC about a year ago impressed by the projects that MiVAC had undertaken in Sri Lanka and Cambodia. What was striking about these projects is the way they tackled land mine affected villages in a holistic manner. Instead of just dealing with demining the village area, the consequences of removing the mines was examined in these projects and benefits that would flow in the aftermath were planned for and implemented.

**CLUSTER MUNITIONS – TWO STEPS FORWARD**

By now, nearly everyone knows what cluster munitions are, or can easily find out. To spare you the Googling, cluster bombs are properly known as submunitions (bombies or bomblets). Lots of little explosives are packaged into one larger bomb or artillery shell. If you want to know more, the web addresses below are a good place to start.

MiVAC supports banning these cruel weapons. The new, improved cluster munitions promised by their supporters are supposed to have a 99% reliability factor. What that means in practice is, a cluster bomb that delivers 300 bomblets is going to leave about three duds. Plus, there are billions of old bomblets in the world's armories, with track records of 50% to 75% reliability. If these get used, you can rely on roughly a third of them turning into de-facto land mines.

Whether you call the duds UXO (unexploded ordnance), ERW (explosive remnants of war) or de-facto landmines, the effect is the same for the men, women, children or animals that trigger them, days, months or years after the battle has moved on: death, maiming and destruction. The use of cluster bombs, by both Russians and Georgians in Ossetia, last August, is supporting the arithmetic of this truth.

The Oslo treaty, properly known as the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) will be signed in Oslo in less than a month. Australia will be signing, along with the 100-plus nations that signed the draft declaration in Dublin, at the end of May. Now, it only remains to ratify the treaty and bring it into force.

I am hoping that, after the signing, Australia will act speedily to ratify the treaty. It would be a shame to push this important accomplishment onto the back burner. Just signing is not enough.

For more, visit: [www.hrw.org/doc/?t=arms\\_clusterbombs](http://www.hrw.org/doc/?t=arms_clusterbombs) [www.icrc.org](http://www.icrc.org) [www.stopclustermunitions.org](http://www.stopclustermunitions.org)

**SPECIAL VIETNAM VETERANS CONCERTS & WORKSHOPS**

Friday 9th thru to Sunday 11th January 2009

**At Harvey Dickson's Country Music Centre Boyup Brook,  
Western Australia.**

Licensed Bar – Hot Food – Drinks – Bush Camping.

Veterans – Families – Mates – Everybody Welcome – Just Book Online at-  
[www.harveydickson.com.au](http://www.harveydickson.com.au). - email: - Harvey [Dickson@westnet.com.au](mailto:Dickson@westnet.com.au) –

Phone/Fax :- 08-97651125 - Mob :- 0429651125

**SPECIAL VIETNAM CONCERT**

**Monster Entertainment Spectacular**

**The Official Charity Harvey Dickson's Blackwood County Music Association  
Inc is**

**MIVAC**

***(MINES VICTIMS AND CLEARANCE TRUST)***

**Phone Bob 0411235696 if you can help MiVAC with the Vietnam Concert**

## 11 VOLUNTEERS

MiVAC wouldn't be able to carry out it's work of assisting communities and individuals who have been affected by the legacy of war if it wasn't for the wonderful support of our many volunteers.

Whether it's the people who travel overseas, at their own expense, and take a hands on role in seeing that our projects are completed and the money we have raised is well spent, or the many individuals who speak at schools and service groups raising awareness, or the ones who attend MiVAC meetings month after month to administer Trust duties and plan fundraisers, etc., we appreciate the time and effort you have put into helping us to assist others.

In this and previous newsletters we have featured reports from our representatives working overseas and we are able to see from their photographs and descriptions of the villages, just what conditions are like for people trying to survive in countries left ravaged by war.

Closer to home I would like to especially thank all MiVAC members who travelled to Tweed Heads and Currumbin in August and helped make the exhibition and luncheon such a success. People who come to mind are John Bygrave, Rosie Bygrave, Max and Beryl Goddard, Mick Hayes George Hulse, Paul Jeffress, Sandy MacGregor, Bob Musgrove, Ric Palmer, Gill Paxton, Donny Patterson, John Pritchard and Dave Sturmer. We all enjoyed the friendship and hospitality shown by Joe Russell, President of Twin Towns RSL and Bob Meehan from the Gold Coast War Museum. Thank you also to Cpl Matthew Colebrook and Cpl David Nicholls from the School of Military Engineering for the landmine display at the exhibition.

I would also like to acknowledge the tremendous amount of work put in by Paul MacMichael who sourced, edited and compiled all the material for our promotional DVD.

Thanks also must go to everyone who has donated money to our projects, prizes for our raffles and helped in any way to make this a really successful year.

Looking forward to your continued support in 2009. Have a happy and safe festive season.

Rob Woolley



*Illustration 13: Some of the volunteers at the Vietnam Exhibition. Paul Jeffress, Rob Woolley, Donny Patterson, Merle Woolley, Gill Paxton, John Bygrave, Rosie Bygrave and George Hulse*



*Illustration 14: Australian Army and Air Force personnel who travelled to Tweed Heads for the Exhibition plus two of Australia's finest landmine detection and guard dogs*

If you would like to volunteer – in any capacity – to help MiVAC continue it's work, or to donate to any of our current projects, then please contact either Gill Paxton or Rob Woolley. The contact details for MiVAC are on Page 1.

Contributions to Newsletter welcome – Merle Woolley - [mivac7nat@yahoo.com.au](mailto:mivac7nat@yahoo.com.au) or PO Box 967, Sandy Bay, TAS. 7109