

**Report on the AVVRG Long Tan Community Health Aid Project and the Involvement  
of the RAR Association WA Branch in the Long Tan Dental Clinic**  
**4<sup>th</sup> July, 2007**

In 1970/71 Bob Wood from Busselton WA served as a platoon commander on operations in D Coy of the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion the Royal Australian Regiment in Vietnam. In 2005 Bob, accompanied by his wife Valma returned to Vietnam for a holiday and to revisit the old battlefield. Whilst there, Bob and Valma learnt of the work of the Australian Veterans' Vietnam Reconstruction Group (the AVVRG). Since 1994, this organisation has undertaken many projects in Vietnam including poverty alleviation, the construction and ongoing support of a leprosarium, an orphanage, a kindergarten at Nui Dat on the site of the former 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Task Force, medical teams and specialist medical work and; currently; the Long Tan Community Health Aid Project centred at the site of the August 1966 Battle of Long Tan.

The Long Tan Community Health Project is a multifaceted project with a total cost of around US\$200,000. The project includes the installation of 300 composting toilets, the installation of a physiotherapy unit, women's' health issues, a children's' fluoridation program and the installation of a fully equipped dental clinic in the existing medical centre at Long Tan at a cost of US\$25,000. At the time of the commencement of the program, the 5000 people of Long Tan had no dental facility. Bob and Valma asked if they could accept the responsibility to raise the \$US25,000 in the South West of WA and this offer was quickly accepted. On return to Australia members of the Royal Australian Regiment (RAR) Association in the SW were canvassed and the RAR Association Dental Clinic Fund Raising Committee was formed. With the inclusion of unbelievably generous donations from a number of individuals, the amount of approximately A\$37,000 was raised. This money was forwarded to and utilised by the AVVRG to purchase and install a new fully equipped dental clinic including an autoclave, a state of the art dentist's chair and ancillary equipment, a 5 KVA generator and the shed to house the generator and an air conditioning unit.

The Long Tan Community Health Aid Project was completed in the first half of 2007. On 25<sup>th</sup> June 2007, the completed project was officially handed over to the Vietnamese people by the Australian Consul General in Ho Chi Minh City, Mr Mal Skelly. This ceremony was held at the Peoples Committee Headquarters in the Hamlet of Long Tan which is situated about 50 metres from the Medical Centre which houses the dental clinic. The ceremony was attended by many Vietnamese and Australian dignitaries and was addressed by Mr Truong Van King, Deputy President of the Peoples Committee of Baria/Vung Tau Province, Mr Mal Skelly, Australian Consul General, Ho Chi Minh City, Mr Paul Murphy, Coordinator, Vietnam Operations of the AVVRG and Mr Bob Wood, Vice President of the

RAR Association WA Branch. After the ceremony, the facilities at the Long Tan Medical Centre were inspected and Mal Skelly, Paul Murphy and Bob and Valma Wood were introduced to the Vietnamese medical and dental staff.

Prior to leaving Australia, Bob and Valma were given an anonymous donation of \$300 from a member of the Busselton RSL and a donation of \$400 from the Special Air Service Regiment Association with instructions to disburse the money as they saw fit in Vietnam. Late last year a severe typhoon hit the Long Tan and surrounding areas resulting in devastation and much loss of life. The area has not yet fully recovered and Bob took the opportunity to present the donated monies to Paul Murphy of the AVVRG where it will be spent on providing food parcels to 50 families in severe need of assistance as a result of the typhoon.

The people of Long Tan through their Peoples Committee representatives expressed their sincere gratitude to all those involved in the successful completion of the Long Tan Community Health Aid Project. In September of this year, a medical team from Australia will be travelling to Vietnam under the auspices of the AVVRG. This team will consist of doctors, nurses and hopefully a dentist and a dental nurse. When the long summer school break is over in Vietnam it is intended that all of the approximately 2000 children in the hamlet of Long Tan will attend the new clinic for a dental examination and treatment as appropriate. All Australian volunteer medical and dental teams are self funded and generally remain in country for around 2 to 4 weeks. Reports say that the work load is heavy, hours are long but the final result is extremely rewarding.



Bob Wood  
Vice President  
Royal Australian Regiment Association WA Branch



**Duty First**

**See attached photos**



L-R Bob Wood and Paul Murphy and Vietnamese Interpreter at the Ceremony – Long Tan



One of the Composting Toilet installed as part of the Project – Long Tan