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HARIM TOK TOK VOLUME 45, MARCH 2006 : PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

Our NGVR 1 PNGVR museum was jointly opened on Sunday 12 February 2006 by the new Federal Minister for Veterans' Affairs, the Hon. Bruce Billson, MP and the Papua New Guinea Consul General to Queensland, Mr Paul E Nerau, LLB. Daily and weekend working bees over 5 weeks attended by up to 15 members as well as a near full time effort by Project Leader, John Holland and Secretary Col Gould prior to the opening assured the completion on time of building and the successful set up of the displays as planned. In fact work officially finished at 2.00 pm the day before the actual opening. Thank you all who participated - *John Holland, Col Gould, Paul Brown, Phil Ainsworth, John Batze, Michael Ahmat, Tom Dowling, Ralph Seeto, Bob Collins, Neil and Edwin Rooney, Barry Wright, Doug Ng, Jesse Chee, Mal Zimmermann and Bruce Crawford*. Thanks also to our Welfare Officer, Paul Brown whose hidden talents enabled him to plan, cut, weld, paint and install 19 security mesh screens over all the museum windows-a major task in itself.

A special thanks also to National Servicemen's site caretaker, Allan Clayton and wife Lorraine, who kept the early bird workers well supplied with tea and toast and kept a very watchful eye on our building and its valuable contents.

The 500 plus who attended the Church Service and opening at the Wacol site were mainly associated with the National Servicemen's Association (NSAA). Our official guests included Paul E Nerau, LLB. Papua New Guinea Consul General and wife Pauline and our NGVR stalwarts, Tom Lega, MM and Jack Goad, and Mr & Mrs Hank Cosgrove. Our honorary Padre, Allan McFarland assisted at the Church service prior to our Museum's opening. Numerous visitors on opening day were extremely positive in their remarks on the layout and variety of military and war memorabilia in our Museum.

Our museum consists of a large carpeted display room complimented by a good size work room and secure storage room. A covered verandah along one side of the building is certainly an asset. While the museum will be shared with the NSAA, we will host the majority of items on display. The Queensland President of NSAA, Mr Colin Bell, is already talking about the need for a second building for the museum.

Minister Billson has confirmed the success of our application to his Department for funding of \$3,000 for display upgrading and we should have the funds any day now. We thank the Minister for his support. The result of our application to the Gaming benefit Fund for air-conditioning, computers, electronic display equipment and specialized display lighting should be known before ANZAC Day.

There is on-site security and safes in which to store our more valuable items. We will finally be able to consolidate all our memorabilia and artifacts in one secure location. Once fully established, the museum will in effect be our HQ, Club, Museum and meeting area. Historic Officer John Holland is now working on a plan to have the museum available for regular showings, particularly for school children visits. Another idea is to have a regular working day at the museum from time to time to maintain the premises and display, as well as for social purposes.

The commercial owner/developer of the Wacol ex-army barracks site has proposed that the NSAA site including the Museum be relocated to another site within the Wacol boundaries-a site over the hill near a creek where a commercial area is planned. The NSAA will take into account our views on this matter at their April meeting.

Good relations with the NSAA continue. Colin Bell, the Queensland President, considers our Association an integral part of the site's use and attraction. Thanks to our Honorary Solicitor Bruce Crawford, our long term occupation licence on site has been negotiated, but the execution of the document is held back until the outgoings for the site have been established. We would expect to pay a proportion of these outgoings.

To date, our Secretary has received 32 Australian Service Medals, 1945-1975 with clasp PNG for our PNG ex-PNGVR comrades. The result of representations to the Minister for Veterans' Affairs made at and following the museum opening for a more streamlined processing of these applications and financial or in-kind assistance for our Association to personally present the ASM's in PNG, and to help establish local PNG Chapters or similar in PNG is awaited. We would like to present these medals before ANZAC Day 2006, however as time moves on this may be impracticable.

Information has been received that there is a local move to start a B Coy PNGVR Ex members Association in Rabaul. Former B Coy Corporal, Lucas POKA, MBE who lives in the Hoskins area, has located some 15 B Coy members. Together with members located in Mt Hagen, Banz, and Port Moresby, we are on the way of seeing real results after a number of years of representations. However, we are mindful that any structure established in PNG must be efficient and able to rely on its own internal resources in the mid to long term. Assistance from the Minister will bring this project to fruition.

The Committee looks forward to seeing everyone at the Regimental Mixed Dinner Reunion and ANZAC Day, details of which are in this newsletter. We are looking into hosting a social day / bar-b-q at our museum on Sunday 23 April so that members who travel into Brisbane for the Regimental Dinner and ANZAC Day march can view our new HQ. Where ever you may be on the 25 April, may you have a successful day and wave the NGVR / PNGVR flag on our behalf.

Phil Ainsworth