

**PRESENTATION OF THE UNIT CITATION INSIGNIA TO RECOGNISE THE  
BRAVERY OF VIETNAM VERERANS WHO SERVED AND FOUGHT IN THE  
BATTLES OF FIRE SUPPORT BASES CORAL AND BALMORAL  
ON BEHALF OF RSL TASMANIA BRANCH**

**SPEECH BY  
HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AC  
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA  
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, WEDNESDAY 15 AUGUST 2018**

Good morning. It is a pleasure for Dick and me to welcome you to Government House for this Presentation of Unit Citation Insignia recognising your actions in the Battles of Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral, which took place 50 years ago on ground to the north-east of Saigon — in an area important to those North Vietnamese Army offensive operations being conducted, and planned, against Saigon in 1968.

I begin by paying my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land—the Mouheneener people. I acknowledge the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal community, who have survived invasion and dispossession, and continue to maintain their identity, culture and Indigenous rights.

The Battles to defend Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral are well documented. The 1st Australian Task Force (1ATF) forward elements were deployed to an Area of Operations in the Bien Hoa province north of Tan Uyen and the Dong Nar River defined as 'AO SURFERS'. This deployment was an 'all consuming' operation for 1ATF conducted some 120 kilometres from their base in Nui Dat and well outside of their normal operating area in the Phuoc Tuy province.

Deployment to AO SURFERS commenced on 12 May 1968. Early the following morning Fire Support Base Coral came under heavy and accurate mortar, rocket-propelled grenade and recoilless-rifle fire, followed by a determined infantry attack in estimated battalion strength.

This attack was followed by a regimental strength attack on the night of 15/16 May. Fire Support Base Balmoral was attacked with coordinated mortar and ground attacks on the nights of 25/26 May and 27/28 May. Those were the facts of the battle.

in April 2011, following years of requests and submissions for its establishment, a Department of Defence Ministerial media statement was released announcing the commencement of a Tribunal Inquiry into unresolved recognition for past acts of naval and military gallantry and valour.

On 12 April 2017, the Assistant Minister for Defence, the Honourable Dan Tehan MP, directed the Tribunal to inquire into and report on Recognition for Australian units that served at the Battles of Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral in Vietnam in 1968.

The Inquiry received 170 written submissions and heard oral submissions from 34 submitters, including the Department of Defence. In the main, submissions recounted very powerful narratives of personal experience. Throughout the submissions the theme of teamwork and collective gallantry is readily apparent and consistently referenced. The message to the Tribunal from all of the veterans of the battles was that, regardless of corps and parent unit, they had fought as a coordinated group and that everybody who was there deserve recognition.<sup>1</sup>

It is important to list the key recommendations of the Tribunal:

**Recommendation 1:** To recognise all participants in the battles, the Tribunal recommends that the 1st Australian Task Force (Forward) be awarded the Unit Citation for Gallantry for extraordinary gallantry in action at the Battles of Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral, between 12 May 1968 and 6 June 1968.

**Recommendation 2:** The Tribunal recommends that no minimum period of service with the 1st Australian Task Force (Forward) in AO SURFERS between the dates 12 May 1968 and 6 June 1968 be imposed as eligibility criteria for individual entitlement to wear this award.

**Recommendation 3:** To capture the legacy of the gallantry displayed by participants in the battles, the Tribunal recommends that the following Australian units substantively deployed to AO SURFERS between 12 May 1968 and 6 June 1968 be awarded the Unit Citation for Gallantry for extraordinary gallantry in action at the Battles of Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral:

- >1st Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment;
- >3rd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment;
- >A Squadron, 3rd Cavalry Regiment;

- >C Squadron, 1st Armoured Regiment;
- >12th Field Regiment, Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery;
- >1st Field Squadron, Royal Australian Engineers.

And so it is now my honour today to present to those individuals present, on behalf of RSL Tasmania Branch, the Unit Citation Insignia to recognise the bravery of Vietnam Veterans who served and fought in the Battles of Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral between the dates of 12 May 1968 and 6 June 1968.

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<sup>1</sup> REPORT OF THE INQUIRY INTO UNIT RECOGNITION FOR SERVICE AT THE BATTLES OF FIRE SUPPORT BASES CORAL AND BALMORAL Dated 3 April 2018