

**Living with Unresolved Grief and Uncompleted Tasks:  
Achieving Closure around Ambiguous Loss  
and Traumatic Events during Wartime**

A Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Victoria University

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines how people deal with contentious life issues where high levels of ambiguity exist, specifically ambiguity arising from wartime losses where authorities declare a service person as Missing-in-Action or Killed-in-Action, without the recovery of a body.

Twelve thousand Australians remain unaccounted-for from the Second World War and the authorities list 42 men as missing from the Korean War. Many relatives and comrades of these missing are still alive, although their numbers are decreasing, especially those concerned with Second World War cases. Nevertheless, unresolved grief and the failure to recover the missing still affect some Australians today.

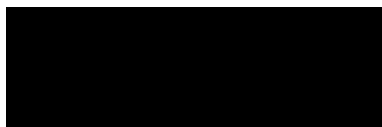
The Vietnam War (1962–75), the most recent conflict where Australia left men on the battlefield provides the platform for this study. During 2007 to 2009, searchers recovered the remains of the six Australians left behind in Vietnam during the War—here called 'the Forgotten Six'.

This study employs grounded theory, drawing on interviews given by 48 relevant individuals and various primary and secondary sources. These sources enable *thick* description of the experiences of the members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades to explore the *affective/experiential* states-of-mind they encountered, and the *strategies* they used to deal with their contentious issues. This research demonstrates *closure* is a real phenomenon, and shows how these family members and comrades progressively achieved closure around their unresolved grief and uncompleted tasks.

In addition, this study shows the use of anachronistic policies by the Australian authorities, coupled with a lack of official interest delayed the recovery of the Forgotten Six for 36 years or more, and perpetuated the ambiguity surrounding their loss. Further analysis suggests the Australian Defence Force might do well to reconsider its policies regarding the management of Missing-in-Action matters, to deal more effectively and compassionately with current and future cases.

## DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICITY

I, James Raymond Bourke, declare that the PhD thesis entitled Living with Unresolved Grief and Uncompleted Tasks: Achieving Closure around Ambiguous Loss and Traumatic Events during Wartime is no more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated this thesis is my own work.

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the author.

*Signature*

10 March 2015

*Date*

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## **DEDICATION**

For my father, John Patrick Carrington Bourke (1908–1958),  
whose funeral I was not permitted to attend and  
for Christine Mary Gillespie (1944–2012),  
who urged me to undertake this research

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The last six years have at times been challenging but carrying out this research has been extremely rewarding in many ways. Not only have I completed the most difficult writing task I have ever undertaken, or even imagined, I have met some interesting people, listened to their stories, made new friends from various walks-of-life and learned more than I ever expected to. However, this thesis would never have come to fruition without the guidance and support of many individuals, and with considerable pleasure and gratitude, I pay tribute to those people.

Three groups emerge. First, there was a range of people who provided academic and collegiate support, which needless to say, was invaluable. Second, 48 participants provided interviews—their role was clearly irreplaceable. Third, family members and friends provided encouragement and support that enabled me to retain my sanity during trying times and facilitated the research process in a variety of meaningful ways.

The support and guidance of my formally appointed supervisors, Professor Robert Pascoe and Dr Adrian Threlfall deserve more than a passing mention. Their assistance took many forms, agreeing to provide supervision, facilitating approval for the study, discussing approaches, offering inspiring ideas and providing invaluable feedback. Associate Professor Wally Karmilowicz provided support as an 'associate' supervisor. I most certainly appreciated Wally's freely given advice on conceptual and methodological issues and his continual constructive critique during the writing process. Other academics, mainly from Victoria University provided advice in a friendly environment, including Professor Michelle Grossman, Professor Phillip Deery and Dr Richard Chauvel. I must also mention Dr Christine Gillespie who, in September 2007 suggested I might like to spend the next few years investigating how the loss of the six men in Vietnam affected their families and comrades. Somehow I thought that was a good idea—and it was! Sadly, Christine died in September 2012.

I must thank Professor Catherine Riessman for introducing me to narrative analysis in February 2009, Dr Leonie Daws for the NVivo course she conducted in September–October 2010 and Professor Kathy Charmaz for her stimulating three-day workshop on Writing Qualitative Research in March 2014. Furthermore, I extend my appreciation to the University for the many useful training sessions I attended, for the support of the members of the Graduate Research Centre, notably Ms Grace Schirripa, and for the services of the library staff who were forever helpful.

Obviously, without the involvement of the 48 participants this research would have been deficient and would have made the writing of this thesis exceedingly difficult, if not impossible. To all participants, you have my heartfelt thanks and I hope I have done justice to your stories.

I would also like to thank the people in Defence and in the respective Ministers' offices for the assistance given to me in the conduct of this study. Again, there are too many people to mention by name.

I must also thank my family who have tolerated my obsessive behaviour throughout most of their lives, but more particularly over the last six years while I worked on this thesis. My children, Rachel, Anthony, Julia, Nicholas and Sarah, Nick's wife, Joanne and Sarah's husband, Brad offered encouragement and contributed to my library through Amazon on celebratory occasions. Sarah provided much needed secretarial support, keeping the work place tidy, which I simply found too difficult. Anthony, my elder son kept my computers and printers alive, performing a number of delicate transplant operations on my ageing machines. Anthony also acted as my chauffeur, driving me to and from Melbourne airport on innumerable occasions, as I ventured forth to conduct interviews and gather data.

I would like to thank the folk who helped during these data gathering activities, offering food and lodging and good company as I wandered around the country. In the West, Darryl Lovell and Ruth Henderson of Perth and Sue Bourke and Max Stephen of Adelaide immediately come to mind. On my 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, Sue presented me with a clean second copy of Sledge's *Soldier Dead: How We Recover, Bury, and Honor Our Military Fallen*, which she purchased while visiting Arlington National Cemetery, VA in 2013. Rachel, my eldest daughter, and her husband Jeremy Lemke, Denyse Gibbs, John and Sue Essex-Clark, and Bill and Joan Rolfe provided a base for my Canberra operations. Lorraine Gillson of Wagga offered her hospitality while I worked in New South Wales. John and Sue Dwyer of Runaway Bay, on the Gold Coast and Peter and Beth Aylett of Cashmere kindly invited me to stay with them while I was in Queensland. John and Sue added to my library with a copy of Budreau's *Bodies of War: World War I and the Politics of Commemoration in America*, purchased while travelling overseas.

I would like to acknowledge the assistance of my friends, Peter Rothwell and Peter Aylett. Rothwell read and re-read various drafts and most importantly, made sure my writing was accessible to the general reader. Aylett assisted in recovering facts related to our trips to Vietnam to investigate the cases of the Forgotten Six.

As with most things I have done during my life, this research has been a team effort and the support and assistance I received was invaluable and very much appreciated. However, I alone am responsible for any omissions or mistakes enshrined in this thesis. The buck stops here.

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## **MILITARY ABBREVIATIONS**

1 ATF	1 <sup>st</sup> Australian Task Force
1 RAR	1 <sup>st</sup> Battalion Royal Australian Regiment
AATTV	Australian Army Training Team Vietnam
ADF	Australian Defence Force
AFV	Australian Force Vietnam
AHU	Army History Unit
ARVN	Army of the Republic of Vietnam
AWM	Australian War Memorial
BNR	Body Not Recovered
CARO	Central Army Records Office
CILHI	Central Identification Laboratory Hawaii
COI	Court of Inquiry
CPL	Corporal
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
DRV	Democratic Republic of Vietnam
ESO	Ex-service organisations
FLGOFF	Flying Officer
FRS	Family Reference Samples
GPR	Ground Penetrating Radar
IWGC	Imperial War Graves Commission
JCRC	Joint Casualty Resolution Centre
JPAC	Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command
JTF–FA	Joint Task for Full Accounting
KIA	Killed-in-Action
KPA	Korean People's Army
LCPL	Lance Corporal
LKP	Last Known Position

LZ	Landing Zone
MIA	Missing-in-Action
NOK	Next-of-Kin
OAH	Operation Aussies Home
PLTOFF	Pilot Officer
POA	Power of Attorney
PTE	Private
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RAN	Royal Australian Navy
RSL	Returned Services League of Australia
SAS	Special Air Service
UWC–Army	Unrecovered War Casualties–Army
VVAA	Veterans Association of Australia

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## BACKGROUND

The wars of the twentieth century inflicted tremendous suffering and loss of life worldwide. Australia, despite her geographic isolation carried her share of suffering, not only in terms of actual loss of life but also through the flow-on effects of these wars. Relatives, friends and comrades of missing service personnel in particular often experienced ambiguity and extreme angst, in assimilating into their everyday lives the physical absence and continuing psychological presence of the missing. In turn, some comrades suffered guilt and shame because they left their mates on the battlefield, and did very little over the years to recover their remains.

The need to account for the missing is an extant requirement and the way in which the State attends to this matter is an issue that reflects the very essence of the nation. There are still over 12,000 unresolved cases of missing service personnel from the Second World War (1939–45).<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, 42 Australian service men remain unaccounted-for from the Korean War (1950–53). Even if their numbers are decreasing, many of the relatives of the missing from these two wars are still alive and often ponder the fate of their loved ones.<sup>2</sup> Occasionally private researchers and/or the Australian Defence Force (ADF) investigate these cases.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This study uses the term 'unresolved cases' to describe casualties where *identifiable* remains have not been recovered. Where the authorities recover unidentifiable remains, they bury them as *Unknown*. Hence, the number of 'unrecovered' casualties is less than the number of unresolved cases and in many instances it is not possible to determine categorically if a given individual is still *missing* or not. Some unknowns could possibly be identified based on desktop research or by opening graves and using state-of-the-art methods of identification, at least where research points to a likely identification. However, current Commonwealth War Graves Commission policy precludes the opening of graves. The term 'unresolved' is effectively synonymous with the American term, 'unaccounted-for'.

<sup>2</sup> I. Saunders, 'Re: Thinking ahead', [e-mail to J. Bourke], 24 Aug. 2011, Cootamundra, NSW. Mr Ian Saunders, whose father, 3/400868 Private John Philip Saunders went missing in Korea on 25 Jan. 1953, has been researching the Australian Korean War MIA cases for a number of years. As of 2011, 33 of the 42 families associated with these cases had provided Family Reference Samples to the US Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory for Mitochondrial DNA analysis, through the work done by Mr Saunders.

<sup>3</sup> For example, in 2010 Mr Donald Gubbay requested assistance from Operation Aussies Home Inc. (a private organisation) to search for his brother Alan Gubbay who, along with three other men disappeared in Apr. 1945 after a raid on Muschu Island, north of Wewak. Army subsequently took over and progressively resolved the four cases. I. McPhedran, 'A WWII digger's family searching for his final resting place has found the army knew all along where he was buried—Just let us lay our war hero brother to rest', *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 16 July 2011, p. 6; and, I. McPhedran, 'Wartime mystery', *Herald Sun* (Melbourne), 18 May 2013, sec. News, p.

(Continued)

The story of the missing and departed is illustrated through six Australian servicemen lost and forgotten in time with the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, until their return home during 2007 to 2009: They are called the Forgotten Six.<sup>4</sup> Disappointingly, the Australian Government and the Defence Force showed little interest in recovering these six missing men.<sup>5</sup> This inaction prompted the establishment of a private organisation 'Operation Aussies Home (OAH) Incorporated' comprising a number of veterans and concerned citizens who decided to investigate the fate of the Forgotten Six. OAH, through determined and concerted action ultimately recovered the remains of two of the men in 2007 and by 2009, OAH and the ADF recovered all six men. However, my story is not just about the Forgotten Six.

This study gives voice to the members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades. Importantly, the study is also an account of the psychological and physical effects of the men's loss on members of their families and on their comrades, as they dealt privately and publicly with the men's loss and initial non-recovery, and their eventual return to Australia. Quite often, ambiguity and searing emotions encased these experiences. *Closure* is at the heart of this story. The study also examines the reasons why it took more than 36 years to recover the six men.

Generally, members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades experienced *anticipatory* and *unresolved* grief before the men's recovery. When searchers recovered the men's remains, the bereaved engaged in what was more akin to *normal* grief. For some of the men's comrades, the failure to recover the men or their remains and feelings of culpability for the men's abandonment engendered a sense of

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26. Another example is the case of John Whitworth. Mrs Vonnie Fletcher lamented the loss of her cousin, John Whitworth who went missing in the Celebes in 1945. In 2000, Mrs Fletcher's daughter, Ms Sally Olander started researching this case and the end-result was Whitworth's remains, along with those of two of his comrades were located, buried as unknowns in the Bomana War Cemetery in PNG. I. McPhedran, 'Mystery that broke a mothers heart', *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 31 Mar. 2012, p. 20; and, W. Snowdon, 'Fallen diggers honoured ending 67 year mystery', Department of Defence, Canberra, ACT, <<http://www.minister.defence.gov.au/2012/11/06/minister-for-defence-science-and-personnel-fallen-diggers-honoured-ending-67-year-mystery-2/>>, accessed 7 Nov. 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Appendix A contains the prosopographies of the six men. Appendix B provides accounts of the men's loss and related detail.

<sup>5</sup> The term 'ADF', which is commonplace in today's vocabulary, emerged in 1976 when the ADF came into being on 1 Jan. D. Horner, *Making the Australian Defence Force, Volume 4, The Australian Centenary History of Defence*, Melbourne, Vic., Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 41. However, the term did not enter general usage until formalised in the annual *Defence Report* of 1980. J. Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn, Melbourne, Vic., Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 262. This thesis uses the term 'Australian Defence Force' or 'Defence Force' to refer to the ADF before 1980.

self-perceived guilt, which overshadowed personal grief, especially for those closely involved in the loss incidents. These experiences were highly ambiguous.

## ***SITUATING THE STUDY***

Although outpourings of grief, guilt and related emotions emerge in this story, the psychology that underpins these emotions or related phenomena does not drive the study; rather, it rests on the narratives obtained directly from participants and on data from other primary sources.

This study is broad. It involves a range of relationship types engaging multiple concepts. Hence, it is necessary to limit to the study's scope. The study's temporal boundaries lie between the time of the men's loss (1965–71) and 2011, after the recovery and repatriation of the remains of the six men (2007–09) and the finalisation of associated commemorative activities. The study focuses primarily on two groups of people, first the members of the men's birth families and additionally, with the married men, members of their conjugal families and members of their widows' birth families; and, second, the men's comrades and associates.<sup>6</sup> Government representatives, ADF and OAH members—and the Forgotten Six—are not the focus of this study.

The structure of this thesis generally follows the traditional standard format with eight chapters as outlined here.

## ***CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW***

A review of the literature identifies specific concerns and further justifies the study. In addition, the exploration of the literature illuminates various matters associated with wartime losses and provides additional context for subsequent analysis and discussion.

This exploration of the literature considers Australia's involvement in the wars of the twentieth century, focusing on the rationale and methods associated with clearing bodies from the battlefield; the commemoration of war dead, including the missing; Australian policies regarding Missing-in-Action (MIA) matters; the war-related experiences of Australians during the twentieth century; and, finally theoretical constructs around bereavement and grief.

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<sup>6</sup> Besides these two groups, as this study shows, the loss and non-recovery of the six men *affected* many veterans and some members of the wider community, even though these individuals had no direct contact with the men. However, this study does not generally encompass such individuals.

There is an examination of the similarities and differences between policies and practices of British and US forces during the two World Wars and the Korean War. During these wars, the British, including Australia, buried their dead overseas while the Americans, on the request of the deceased person's Next-of-Kin (NOK) allowed repatriation of their dead. In 1966, Australia departed from the British Commonwealth policy of overseas burials and attempted to repatriate those who died in Vietnam. Australian authorities based their policy regarding the recovery of missing service personnel mainly on experiences from the First World War and these policies remained intact until the first decade of the twenty-first century.

During the twentieth century, Australia experienced dramatic changes in the cultural and social attitudes toward death. Stoicism and the tendency toward death denial, engendered primarily by the two World Wars survived until the 1970s, when more emotionally open mourning practices progressively emerged. Chapter 2 charts these changes thereby providing context for the experiences of members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades, as they dealt with their respective issues.

Chapter 2 also presents a brief examination of the theories that evolved during the twentieth century around bereavement, grief and mourning. The examination is brief to the extent that an understanding of the theories, even superficially, provides the basis for assessing and interpreting the emergent narratives.<sup>7</sup>

The exploration of the literature highlights two concerns related to Australia's wartime losses during the second half of the twentieth century. First, the efficacy of Australia's efforts to manage matters associated with MIA personnel since the 1950s, particularly in Vietnam and Korea, appeared wanting. Second, although there are contemporary studies dealing with missing Australians, there is minimal research investigating the grieving experiences of Australians associated with service persons declared MIA, particularly during the second half of the twentieth century.

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<sup>7</sup> To avoid forcing concepts onto the data during the analysis, close engagement with this *technical* literature took place after the collection and analysis of the bulk of the data. Nevertheless, a cursory reading of specific technical literature early in the process assisted in defining the basic concepts and provided a minimal level of theoretical sensitivity. J. M. Corbin and A. L. Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn, Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publications, 2008, pp. 35–6.

### **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN**

Based on the issues of concern and the study's intent, Chapter 3 presents the research design. The study's characteristics supported the use of a qualitative approach.

The research question considered three issues: First, what were the experiences, key behaviours and/or attitudes of the members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades around the men's loss and non-recovery? Second, what role did the Government, the ADF and OAH play in recovering the men and why did these recoveries take 36 years or more? Third, after the searchers discovered the men's remains, what were the experiences, key behaviours and/or attitudes of the family members and comrades? Interrogation of the research question enables the development of a conceptual framework, which guided the subsequent design.

Application of various criteria resulted in the identification of 19 relatives as subjects for inclusion in the study, 10 of whom were female. A similar process identified 18 comrades as subjects, 17 of whom were male.

Data obtained directly from participants and other primary sources ground this study. Chapter 3 acknowledges the pre-eminence of data in the research process. Forty-eight participants consisting of nine relatives and 18 comrades of the men, 10 OAH members, two Government Ministers and one senior departmental staff member, five ADF members and three other individuals with relevant knowledge gave interviews. The 27 relatives and comrades who consented to interviews included 24 of the 37 subjects.

A constructivist epistemology underpins this research and the principal theoretical perspective is interpretivism, specifically symbolic interactionism. At a lower level, a critical perspective informs the analysis of OAH's impact on the bureaucracy, and their management of MIA matters.

I offer limited biographical detail and related information to reflect my axiological position, and I trust I have provided sufficient background to allow the reader to assess the effect of my values and perspectives on the study. Nevertheless, as far as possible, questions were constructed and interviewees engaged to avoid the influence of these values and perspectives, and I *endeavoured* to bracket my values during the subsequent data analysis and interpretation.

This study adopts a deontological approach to matters ethical. Although conceptual in nature, ethical considerations are pervasive, affecting many issues, through to and including managing research outcomes.



Methodological options included the use of an ethnographic or a case study approach; however, the methodology of constructivist grounded theory emerged as being the most suitable. The selection of techniques employed in executing this methodology was quite eclectic, but draws mainly on the techniques espoused by Strauss and Corbin.

Initial (open) coding of all available data identified the resident concepts and three key phenomena emerged. First, 'Living with the Un-dead' deals with the experiences of the family members and comrades of the Forgotten Six from the moment the men were lost until 2002. Second, 'Attending to Unfinished Business', covers the story around the investigation of the six cases and the men's recovery during 2002 to 2009. Third, 'Repositioning the Dead', relates to the experiences of members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades, while OAH and the ADF investigated the six cases and recovered the men's remains.

The next stage of the analysis involves examining these three phenomena in terms of their causal conditions, their context, the actions/interactions taken to manage them and the outcomes of these actions/interactions. In Chapters 4, 5 and 6, grounded theory methodology enables *thick* descriptions of the experiences of those affected by the men's loss, as well as the experiences of those involved in the men's recovery and repatriation, the intent being to provide a detailed and accessible account of events. This analysis and interpretation lends perspective to the multiple realities faced by the members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades.

The design as initially conceptualised represented a tidy and well-delineated package. However, as the study progressed and the data spoke, consistent with the nature of qualitative research some design issues demanded closer attention. In particular, the degree of critical interpretation increased when assessing official policies and practices associated with MIA matters.

#### **CHAPTER 4: 'LIVING WITH THE UN-DEAD'**

Chapter 4, 'Living with the Un-dead' provides intimate descriptions of the experiences of members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades before the men's recovery, a period of 36 years or more, focusing on practical actions/interactions, emotions experienced and cognitive processes, as the family members and comrades went about living their everyday lives with the un-dead.

The initial focus was on the experience of grief; however, for some of the men's comrades, with the failure to recover the men or their remains overshadowing their grief there was an enduring sense of guilt. These feelings of guilt were associated with

culpability and were especially evident among those closely involved in the loss incidents.

The actions/interactions of the family members and comrades resulted in a number of outcomes, the most significant being their efforts to gain closure around their contentious issues. An important facet of this closure was the creation of social spaces wherein, through various devices the living maintained contact with the dead. Essentially, the construction of these social spaces relied on remembering, commemorating and communicating with the dead. Another importation outcome was the development of narratives describing how family members and comrades dealt with their contentious issues. Examination of the narratives of family members detected a hierarchy of grief within the families and identified a central mourning figure, the person family members perceived as most affected by the loss.

## **CHAPTER 5: 'ATTENDING TO UNFINISHED BUSINESS'**

Chapter 5, 'Attending to Unfinished Business' examines the lobbying and investigative activities of OAH during 2002 to 2009 and the impact of these activities on members of the men's families and their comrades. This Chapter also examines the authorities' involvement in the men's recovery and their interaction with OAH. Chapter 5 clearly positions me, as the researcher, within the study.

Furthermore, the discussion illuminates reasons underlying or directly explaining the delay of 36 years or more in returning the Forgotten Six to Australia. Until 2007, the level of interest within the Defence Force regarding the Vietnam MIAs was not sufficient to trigger action and politicians did not consider these MIA cases worthy of their attention. What is more, the contemporaneous policies allowed the authorities to sidestep active investigations, thereby obviating the need to revisit the delicate topic of the Vietnam War—a sorry indictment on the Australian Government and the ADF. These policies were anachronistic and did not acknowledge the contemporaneous social, political and cultural environments within Australia. However, after 2006 the redemptive upswing by the Government showed they were acknowledging these environments, and were prepared to set aside their outdated policies for compassionate outcomes.

Chapter 5 presents an ironic account of the efforts to convince the bureaucracy of the value of locating and retrieving the bodies of the Forgotten Six. The gravitas of Australia's leaders, so obvious at times when they wish to praise the sacrifices of service personnel, appeared to evaporate when confronted with deciding whether to do anything about these six MIAs from Vietnam. The irony consists in the changing

political circumstances that made these recoveries a matter of public approbation, where disapprobation had once been the dominant sentiment.

## **CHAPTER 6: 'REPOSITIONING THE DEAD'**

Chapter 6, 'Repositioning the Dead', highlights the years 2002 to 2009 and examines the effects of the recovery operations, the men's repatriations and their funerals on members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades. This chapter also considers the repositioning of the dead in terms of elevated levels of closure available to family members and comrades.

The salient action of the families during this period was to accept or request investigation of their cases by OAH and/or the ADF. Because members of the families risked levels of closure attained prior to the reopening of their cases, these earlier levels of closure were evidently lower than the level to which the family members aspired.

The investigation of the cases of the Forgotten Six and their recovery provided information that helped redress the ambiguity hitherto endured by family members and comrades. Furthermore, for a number of the men's comrades, specifically those who experienced feelings of guilt around abandoning the men in Vietnam, the recovery of the remains of the Forgotten Six represented the ultimate act of reparation, which finalised an uncompleted task.

The men's recovery categorically confirmed their death, enabled the families to conduct funerals, afforded the rite of passage to the dead and enabled family members and others to re-engineer the social spaces in which they continued to connect with the dead. This study revealed the importance of such on-going connections, as an essential part of the closure process.

During this period, there was significant emotional healing among the members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades and within the general veteran community. Interestingly, a group of persons, peripheral to the family members and comrades emerged. This group consisted of veterans and members of the wider community who, while having no direct contact with the Forgotten Six had an interest in the men's loss and non-recovery. After the men's recovery, these people emerged in full-force with intense emotional outpourings, with some claiming *ownership* of the men. Possibly, these outpourings derived from the body's symbolism, the moral obligation to the dead and their families, and/or the perceived benefit within the grieving process of having a body and a funeral.

During the repositioning of the dead, in at least two families there was considerable emotional turmoil due to the emergence of *mavericks* who challenged for the position of central mourning figure.

## **CHAPTER 7: THEORISING EXPERIENCES**

Chapter 7 considers the experiences of the members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades from 1965 to 2011, at a higher level of abstraction; reviews the study's findings and compares them with theories and observations of others to identify items that might add to the body of knowledge; and, examines which findings might be transferable. The use of grounded theory methodology enables the identification of the overarching phenomenon, *Managing Contentious Life Issues*.

Analysis of the stories around the Forgotten Six yielded a number of findings. An interpretation of the narratives delivered by participants and associated data led to an understanding of the *affective/experiential* states-of-mind experienced by family members and comrades along with the strategies they used to deal with men's loss and eventual recovery. Four *affective/experiential* states emerged—*Optimism*, *Helplessness*, *Despair* and *Resignation*—each reflecting multiple social realities. Self-assessments of the likelihood of others providing assistance to resolve the contentious issues faced by family members and comrades, and their assessments of the efficacy of their personal efforts to achieve a resolution, determined these states-of-mind. These states-of-mind did not emerge in any particular order but created a unique pattern of experience for each individual. Similar self-assessments enabled family members and comrades to identify the actions/interactions that might be necessary and feasible to redress their contentious issues. They mapped their strategies accordingly, which included *Activism*, *Substitution*, *Non-engagement* and *Acceptance*.

Further examination of the data identified the levels of closure that progressively became available between 1965 and 2011. Closure in the context of unresolved grief is categorised within five levels including *Initial Closure*, *Stalled Closure*, *Forced Closure*, *Lapsed Time Closure* and *Enhanced Closure*. Closure may also relate to uncompleted tasks where high levels of ambiguity and perceived guilt exist. These levels of closure do not necessarily emerge in sequence and *Enhanced Closure* is not necessarily final or absolute.

Others documented extensively the significance of places, symbols and events within the grieving process, with the grave preminent. With most members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades, the symbolic importance of the grave as a focal point for grief receded over time. Most bereaved did not ritualise cemetery visits.

Many family members and comrades of the Forgotten Six needed to maintain their emotional bonds with the dead. To achieve a substantive level of closure, the bereaved engineered comfortable and durable social spaces to accommodate the identities of the deceased. The social space, as a mental construct, provided the principal means through which the bereaved maintain their bonds with the dead, although the grave remains a significant emotional symbol for some.

The severity of the impact of death on individual family members and comrades varied; however, the experience of grief within the families in particular was hierarchical. Most family members endorsed the hierarchy of grief in order to maintain family harmony.

The story of the Forgotten Six adds to our knowledge in two areas: First, the experiencing of *affective/experiential* states-of-mind (*Optimism, Helplessness, Despair* and *Resignation*); and, second, the existence of the phenomenon of closure at five distinct levels (*Initial Closure, Forced Closure, Lapsed Time Closure, Stalled Closure* and *Enhanced Closure*).

The generalised strategies identified herein (*Activism, Substitution, Non-engagement* and *Acceptance*) hardly represent fresh knowledge but they do provide a schema for understanding the action-oriented behaviours of people dealing with ambiguous loss, unresolved grief and uncompleted tasks.

Although partly at odds with some earlier mainstream theories, the desire of most to maintain their bonds with the dead is not necessarily a new finding. However, although others have recognised the processes involved in its construction, here the creation of the social space is emphasised as an important part of the closure process.

The hierarchy of grief is a novel concept but others have articulated the concepts that underpin such a hierarchy. However, the potentially deleterious effect of family members not acknowledging the hierarchy is a fresh observation.

Although these findings derive specifically from the accounts of family members and comrades of the Forgotten Six, some findings and observations might be transferable to other populations. In particular, some findings might reasonably apply to relatives and comrades connected to unresolved MIA cases from the Second World War and the Korean War. Furthermore, some findings and observations might apply to individuals associated with people who go missing in Australia, and/or to relatives and friends of Australians killed overseas when the bodies of the deceased are not recoverable.

## **CHAPTER 8: REACHING CONCLUSIONS**

Chapter 8 provides an overview of the study and discusses several matters arising, as well as alluding briefly to the scholarly value of this work.

The matters arising are relevant to the extent they highlight issues individuals and agencies managing unresolved MIA cases might consider. Although this study did not set out to offer a critique of official MIA related policies and practices, it offers non-prescriptive comment as appropriate and in some instances, presents pointed observations. In the spirit of action-oriented research, the Government and the ADF need to attend to MIA matters more diligently. The patriotism underpinning the centenary commemorations around the First World War suggests the time is right for the Government to declare and demonstrate the nation's moral obligation to her war dead and their families. These measures contribute to the definition of who we are as a nation. Chapter 8 suggests four matters that require attention.

First, this study calls on the Australian Government to provide the public and the standing force with an unequivocal guarantee that the Government will afford a home burial for all Australian service personnel who die overseas, regardless of the level of conflict. Although the current practice is to repatriate the bodies of Australian service personnel killed overseas, the authorities should publicly confirm the policy as a long-term commitment, as part of Australia's national ethos.

Second, the ADF policy on MIA matters might benefit by a re-examination to align it with today's societal expectations and to ensure the policy's effectiveness and economy. In particular, the authorities should determine and prioritise the cases they will investigate. It appears reasonable to afford priority to cases where there are still living relatives and comrades who knew the missing personally.

Third, some practical issues deriving from the existing policy, or from any new policy might require attention. For example, to capitalise on their latent capability the ADF should promulgate contact details of the officers managing MIA matters, and indicate the scope of investigative work the armed Services would undertake, to enable those requiring follow-up of their cases to request assistance more easily. Furthermore, the ADF should ensure effective tracking of active cases.

Fourth, the Government and the ADF should commit to investigating MIA cases from the Second World War and the Korean War on request of the NOK. Investigation of the Korean War cases will require Australian politicians to apply their diplomatic skills to open a humanitarian dialogue with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and any other necessary parties.

The stories embedded in this study provide first hand accounts of experiences around ambiguous loss and unresolved grief, and guilt and remorse associated with uncompleted tasks during wartime. The value of this work resides in the fact that data provided by individuals ground these accounts and the subsequent interpretations of them.

### ***THE STUDY IN PERSPECTIVE***

With the shifting political and social realities of commemorating an unpopular war, the various milieux traversed by this story became clear with the writing and revealed the experience of multiple realities. Within the dynamic cultural, social and political environments that pertained, family members and comrades of the missing lived beneath an umbrella of fluctuating narratives regarding the treatment of Australia's war dead. Initially, a federal defence bureaucracy supposedly charged with the responsibility of attending to the public interest, proved relentlessly obdurate and only after extensive lobbying by OAH and some of the members of the families and comrades of the Forgotten Six, did the bureaucracy cooperate to recover the remains of *all* six men.

In summary, this research achieved a number of useful outcomes. First, through the descriptive accounts, the study provides an understanding of the effects of having a relative or a comrade go missing during wartime, in a relatively contemporary Australian setting. Furthermore, the embedded stories illuminate how family members and comrades of the missing might deal with their recovery and illustrates the importance of such recoveries. Second, this study clearly shows that due to the employment anachronistic policies and the lack of official interest, the State was delinquent in their management of MIA matters during the second half of the twentieth century. Furthermore, this situation still pertains, remembering the 42 Australians who remain unaccounted-for on the Korean peninsula. Third, this work contributes to the body of knowledge in two areas: family members and comrades of the Forgotten Six potentially experienced four *affective/experiential* states as they dealt with their contentious issues; and, there were five levels of *closure* available to them.

Hopefully, others might find value in this work, thinking of groups such as fellow researchers interested in the study of missing persons; counsellors working with the relatives of the missing; and, individuals in agencies responsible for managing the cases of missing persons.

In conclusion, the story around the experiences of the members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades highlights the rationality of the human mind, even when confronted with enduring ambiguity and highly emotional circumstances.

The narratives of these family members and comrades are a testament to their resilience and fortitude as they dealt with the loss, non-recovery and eventual recovery of the Forgotten Six, after 36 years or more.



## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### **INTRODUCTION**

Across the broad sweep of the twentieth century, Australian authorities faced the daunting task of recovering, commemorating and disposing of the remains of over 104,000 war-dead. As well as dealing with their individual wartime experiences, Australians mourned these lost souls and subsequently attempted to deal with the emotional aftermaths of the various wars.

This review identifies and investigates the literature of Australia's wartime losses. It also illuminates various matters associated with such losses, including the theoretical constructs around bereavement and grief.

### **AN OVERVIEW OF SUPPORTING LITERATURE**

Two blocks of literature are relevant. First, historical literature illuminates how various nations recovered and commemorated their war dead and their missing. In addition, this literature reveals the impact of these wars on society and provides an understanding of how Australians dealt with associated bereavement and grief. Second, an examination of relevant academic literature illuminates the theoretical constructs around bereavement and grief that evolved during the twentieth century. In both contexts, we will compare the work of Australian writers with that of their American counterparts, as the contrast proves illuminating.

Although a wealth of literature from a number of disciplines informs this study, space allows for only a brief overview of some of the more important works, selected because of their breadth, clarity and certitude, in the context of this study.

American journalist Michael Sledge (2005) provided a seminal comprehensive understanding of why and how nations recover their dead and what the dead mean to the living.<sup>1</sup> Australian historian Bart Ziino (2007) examined Australian experiences during the First World War to understand the role of war graves and cemeteries in

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<sup>1</sup> M. Sledge, *Soldier Dead: How We Recover, Bury, and Honor Our Military Fallen*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2005. This skilfully written work calls on extensive research and chronicles American policy on recovery and commemoration of her war dead from the early 1800s to mid-2004. Sledge treats many of the fundamental concepts that underpin this study.

private grief and mourning. Ziino considered how Australians dealt with the emotional tyranny of distance with Australian war dead buried overseas.<sup>2</sup>

Another Australian historian, Joy Damousi (1999) provided an insight into the effects of loss and mourning following the two World Wars on men, combatants and fathers, and on women, mothers and widows. In particular, she highlighted gender differences in the experience of grief.<sup>3</sup> Damousi (2001) also examined mourning and grief among Australian women who lost their husbands during the two World Wars, the Korean War and the Vietnam War and the impact of returning veterans on family life.<sup>4</sup> Australian historian, Stephen Garton delivered a compelling account of the impact of the two World Wars on veterans and their families. He also provided a convincing account of the experiences of Vietnam veterans, and concluded that fundamentally their experiences and post-war behaviours paralleled those of veterans from earlier wars.<sup>5</sup>

Australian historian, Pat Jalland (2006) charted the culture around death and dying in twentieth century Australia, examining civilian and wartime bereavement. Jalland highlighted the cultural shifts that took place regarding death and dying in twentieth century Australia.<sup>6</sup>

Against the background of the various theories around bereavement and grief that emerged during the twentieth century, American educator, researcher and family therapist, Pauline Boss (2000) provided definitive insights into ambiguous loss.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> B. Ziino, *A Distant Grief: Australians, War Graves and the Great War*, Crawley, WA, University of Western Australia Press, 2007. Ziino based his research on a wide range of primary and secondary sources.

<sup>3</sup> J. Damousi, *The Labour of Loss: Mourning, Memory and Wartime Bereavement in Australia*, Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press, 1999. Damousi taps a wide range of primary and secondary sources to produce an empathetic account of the experiences of her subjects.

<sup>4</sup> J. Damousi, *Living with the Aftermath: Trauma, Nostalgia and Grief in Post-War Australia*, Cambridge, UK, University of Cambridge Press, 2001. Damousi makes use of over 50 oral testimonies and numerous other sources to render a work that is powerful and insightful.

<sup>5</sup> S. Garton, *The Cost of War: Australians Return*, Melbourne, Vic., Oxford University Press, 1996. Of particular interest to this study, Garton explores the way in which history, popular culture and memory intertwined to produce a characterisation of Australian Vietnam veterans, influenced largely by the American experience.

<sup>6</sup> P. Jalland, *Changing Ways of Death in Twentieth-Century Australia: War, Medicine and the Funeral Business*, Sydney, NSW, University of New South Wales Press, 2006. Jalland utilises a broad range of sources to provide a compelling account of Australians' attitudes to death and dying during the twentieth century.

<sup>7</sup> P. Boss, *Ambiguous Loss: Learning to Live with Unresolved Grief* (1999), Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2000. This widely read book provides an original and humane

American researcher and scholar, Nancy Berns (2011) provided a critical review of closure in North American society, and suggested closure emerged in many contexts such as experiencing grief, dealing with painful reminders and relationships, answering haunting questions and coping with guilt and shame.<sup>8</sup>

The balance of this review includes historical accounts of various wars or specific war-related activities; unit histories; biographical accounts; and, journal articles. The focus is generally clinical with some historical accounts of particular activities.

## **BATTLEFIELD CLEARANCE: REASONS AND METHODS**

In war, nations are often unable to recover all of the dead. Governments often do not have the time, resources, or in some cases *the will* to recover all bodies. Furthermore, the trauma inflicted on bodies by the weapons of modern industrialised warfare contributes to the difficulties associated with their recovery and their identification.<sup>9</sup> The methods of clearing the battlefields varied from war to war, as did the identification and subsequent processing of the dead.

The clearance of bodies from the battlefield is an imperative for a number of reasons. First, authorities sometimes wish to establish the cause of death—these are forensic reasons. Second, especially in conditions of static warfare, combatants collect and bury the dead to maintain the health of survivors. Third, bodies are collected and removed from view to sustain combatants' morale. Fourth, providing the deceased body can assist in the grieving process. Fifth, recovery of the dead satisfies underlying political reasons associated with the body's symbolism. Sixth, perhaps most importantly, nations recover the dead to meet the perceived moral obligation to those who die while serving their country.<sup>10</sup>

Military forces employ four types of recovery operations to clear the battlefield: combat recoveries, post-combat recoveries, area clearance operations and historical

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account of the effects of ambiguous loss. To illustrate her arguments Boss draws on her clinical experience and provides examples of families experiencing ambiguous loss.

<sup>8</sup> N. Berns, *Closure: The Rush to End Grief and What It Costs Us*, Philadelphia, PA, Temple University Press, 2011. Berns based her publication on a grounded theory study that she conducted; however, Bern's rendition is accessible to the layperson. Berns draws heavily on relevant literature and her personal experience of loss and grief.

<sup>9</sup> Sledge, *Soldier Dead: How We Recover, Bury, and Honor Our Military Fallen*, p. 67; Jalland, *Changing Ways of Death in Twentieth-Century Australia: War, Medicine and the Funeral Business*, p. 91; and, Ziino, *A Distant Grief: Australians, War Graves and the Great War*, pp. 3, 89.

<sup>10</sup> Sledge, *Soldier Dead: How We Recover, Bury, and Honor Our Military Fallen*, pp. 14–27.

recoveries.<sup>11</sup> Troops sometimes attempt combat recoveries during the heat of battle and, after particular engagements end assigned elements undertake post-combat recoveries, circumstances permitting. During the First and Second World Wars and during the early stages of the Korean War, combatants buried the dead near the front in temporary graves, but not all bodies were recoverable.<sup>12</sup> In some instances, individuals died of wounds in dressing stations or hospitals near the front and combatants buried these dead in temporary graves nearby.<sup>13</sup> After the cessation of hostilities, if burial sites were accessible, recovery units conducted area clearance operations to collect available and occasionally unidentifiable bodies and buried them in permanent cemeteries near to the place of death, or arranged repatriation of remains, in accordance with their country of origin's policy. Historical recoveries take place well after hostilities have ceased, based on archival research and in-country investigations.

## **BATTLEFIELD CLEARANCE AND COMMEMORATION**

Early in the twentieth century, British policy guided the development of the Australian Defence Force. The purpose of such developments was to enable Australia to contribute more effectively to the Empire's defence. Hence, at the outbreak of the First World War (1914–18), Australia deployed troops as required by Britain and adopted many British policies and practices.

During the First World War, 1,117,091 service personnel from the British Empire forces lost their lives.<sup>14</sup> This War also proved to be Australia's most costly

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp. 31–2.

<sup>12</sup> Historical accounts often refer to the Korean War and the Vietnam War as 'conflicts', primarily because there was never any formal declaration of war by the US, Australia or any other of the protagonists. In the context of this study, such a distinction is semantic. In both instances, there was open, armed and prolonged conflict. Therefore, this study uses the terms 'Korean War' and 'Vietnam War', which appears to be consistent with everyday usage.

<sup>13</sup> Those in charge of temporary burials generally recorded the relevant details to facilitate subsequent recovery operations.

<sup>14</sup> Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 'Commonwealth War Graves Commission Annual Report 2012–13', Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Maidenhead, UK, 2013, p. 43. In 1922, the British War Office estimated that from within the British Empire, military deaths attributed to the First World War were approximately 908,371, between 4 Aug. 1914 and 31 Dec. 1920. The War Office, 'Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire During the Great War 1914–1920', London, UK, His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1922, p. 237. The current study did not attempt reconciliation of the numbers provided by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and the War Office. By way clarification, in 1960, the originally constituted Imperial War Graves Commission was renamed the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. T. A. E. Gibson and G. K. Ward, *Courage Remembered: The Story Behind the Construction and* (Continued)

military endeavour with the loss of 62,080 lives. On the cessation of hostilities, 25,000 Australians remained missing on the Western Front, but as of 2013, 38,796 Australians now lie in marked graves, while memorials to the missing carry the names of another 23,284.<sup>15</sup>

After the Armistice, the respective agencies exhumed bodies from their temporary graves and conducted area clearance operations to locate unrecovered dead, to enable burial in permanent cemeteries. In March 1919, 1,100 volunteers, as members of the Australian Graves Detachment carried out area clearance operations in conjunction with British units.<sup>16</sup>

Sir Fabian Ware (1869–1949) founded the Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC), which was formalised by Royal Charter in May 1917.<sup>17</sup> The Commission's underlying principle debarred repatriation of the Empire's war dead and mandated their burial in the nearest IWGC Cemetery.<sup>18</sup> The Commission created some 1,850 cemeteries worldwide, with more than half positioned on the former Western Front, in France and Belgium.<sup>19</sup> Subsequently, the authorities buried 70% of the Empire's war dead on these sites, 53% in identified graves and 17% as *Unknowns*. Thirty per cent remained missing.<sup>20</sup> Shortly after completing these burials, the IWGC set about commemorating the missing by name on newly erected memorials.<sup>21</sup> As early as 1916,

*Maintenance of the Commonwealth's Military Cemeteries and Memorials of the Wars of 1914–18 and 1939–45*, London, UK, Stationery Office Books, 1989, p. 63.

<sup>15</sup> Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 'Commonwealth War Graves Commission Annual Report 2012–13', p. 43. Searchers recovered the bodies of a number of the *missing* and buried them as *Unknowns*, because identifications were not possible. Therefore, we cannot say for certain if a given individual remains unrecovered or not. In some cases, the authorities could not even establish the deceased's nationality. Hence, we cannot say precisely how many *Australians* the authorities buried as *Unknowns* and therefore how many *Australians* have not yet been recovered.

<sup>16</sup> Ziino, *A Distant Grief: Australians, War Graves and the Great War*, p. 91. In Aug. 1919, the Australian Graves Service replaced the Australian Graves Detachment and the new organisation focused on the needs of the relatives more than on physical recovery of remains. Ziino, *A Distant Grief: Australians, War Graves and the Great War*, pp. 84–5.

<sup>17</sup> Ziino, *A Distant Grief: Australians, War Graves and the Great War*, p. 55.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 109–17. As part of their emerging policy, in Apr. 1915 the British banned 'exhumations of any sort'. Ziino, *A Distant Grief: Australians, War Graves and the Great War*, p. 39. The principle of equal commemoration underpinned the Commission's philosophy. Ziino, *A Distant Grief: Australians, War Graves and the Great War*, pp. 111–15.

<sup>19</sup> Ziino, *A Distant Grief: Australians, War Graves and the Great War*, p. 3.

<sup>20</sup> Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 'Commonwealth War Graves Commission Annual Report 2012–13', p. 43.

<sup>21</sup> Ziino, *A Distant Grief: Australians, War Graves and the Great War*, p. 3; and, K. S. Inglis assisted by J. Brazier, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn, Carlton, Vic., Melbourne University Press, 2008, pp. 246–7. The largest of these memorials

(Continued)

although there was some opposition to the IWGC principles in Britain, Australians generally accepted the Commission's mode of action, and indeed expected the State's intervention in the commemoration of the country's war dead.<sup>22</sup> Hence, during the First World War the British Empire laid claim to the dead, including Australian dead to build memorials to the Empire in the form of War Cemeteries.<sup>23</sup> By default, this ownership extended to the missing.

In late 1921, even though British recovery efforts were yielding 'an average of six hundred bodies weekly', the War Office discontinued active searching on the Western Front. Nonetheless, authorities accepted remains found by accident, for burial in the nearest War Cemetery.<sup>24</sup> Understandably, authorities needed to balance the disruption caused by active searching against the needs to rebuild and repair devastated sites of combat. The British decision not to engage in active searching for the missing became Australian policy, which persisted into the twenty-first century.

Over time, the First World War battlefields continued to yield the remains of Australian service personnel.<sup>25</sup> Private citizens often accidentally discovered these remains. At other times, the discovery of remains resulted from purposeful investigations. For example, in 2002 a small band of amateur historians led by Lambis Englezos, a Greek-born art and crafts high-school teacher from Melbourne, began researching the missing soldiers from the battle of Fromelles. In the northern summer of 2009, the work of Englezos and his team justified the relevant authorities excavating the site the team suggested, leading to the recovery of 250 bodies.<sup>26</sup>

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stands at Thiepval, on the Somme and carries 73,000 names. The iconic memorial, the Menin Gate at Ieper in Belgium, carries another 55,000 names.

<sup>22</sup> Ziino, *A Distant Grief: Australians, War Graves and the Great War*, pp. 57–8.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 107. Among Australian casualties, there was one exception to the rule of non-repatriation during the First World War. Australian authorities permitted the repatriation of the body of Major General Bridges in 1915 after his death at Gallipoli, and buried him at the Royal Military College, Duntroon, ACT. Inglis assisted by Brazier, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape*, pp. 72, 90.

<sup>24</sup> Ziino, *A Distant Grief: Australians, War Graves and the Great War*, p. 99. Surprisingly, after active searching was discontinued, between 1921 and 1934 'more than ... 36,500 British bodies', mostly unidentifiable, were recovered. Ziino, *A Distant Grief: Australians, War Graves and the Great War*, p. 105.

<sup>25</sup> Ziino, *A Distant Grief: Australians, War Graves and the Great War*, p. 3.

<sup>26</sup> P. Lindsay, *Fromelles: Australia's Darkest Day and the Dramatic Discovery of our Fallen World War One Diggers*, Prahran, Vic., Hardie Grant Books, 2007, pp. 185–7, 448; and, Department of Veterans' Affairs, 'Order of Service: Dedication and Burial: Fromelles (Pheasant Wood) Military Cemetery', Canberra, ACT, Department of Veterans' Affairs, Office of the Australian War Graves, 2010, p. 4.

During the First World War, 116,516 Americans died, including 53,402 Killed-in-Action (KIA) and 3,350 MIA—appreciably fewer than those of the British forces.<sup>27</sup> Soon after the Americans entered the War in April 1917, they established a Graves Registration Service to manage their in-theatre dead. After the Armistice, the Memorial Division of the Quartermaster Corps took over the duties of the Graves Registration Service, recovered bodies from temporary graves and scoured the former battlefields to recover others.<sup>28</sup>

America's policy of repatriating her war dead, at least her dead officers, dates back to the Seminole Indian Wars of the early 1800s.<sup>29</sup> With the Spanish–American War of 1898, the precedent emerged that the American authorities would return all war dead to their native land.<sup>30</sup> In September 1918, the US Secretary of War announced the Government would ensure a 'home burial' for American service personnel killed during the War.<sup>31</sup> The US Government modified this arrangement in 1919 to allow the NOK to decide their relatives' final disposition.<sup>32</sup> Seventy per cent of the contactable NOK favoured repatriation.<sup>33</sup> As a result, by 1922 the US repatriated 45,588 bodies. Upon repatriation, families could elect for burial of their kin in private plots, State

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<sup>27</sup> J. W. I. Chambers (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to American Military History* Oxford, UK, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 894. The number of reported US casualties varies. Budreau reports as of May 1919, archival sources indicated 80,178 Americans had died during the War, but only 34, 063 had been KIA. The number of missing is also vague. Budreau suggests 4,102 MIA; and, Sledge suggests 4,452. L. M. Budreau, *Bodies of War: World War I and the Politics of Commemoration in America, 1919–1933*, New York, NY, New York University Press, 2010, p. 19; and, Sledge, *Soldier Dead: How We Recover, Bury, and Honor Our Military Fallen*, p. 67. This study uses the numbers given by Chambers.

<sup>28</sup> Sledge, *Soldier Dead: How We Recover, Bury, and Honor Our Military Fallen*, pp. 36–7, 66–7.

<sup>29</sup> During the Seminole Indian Wars, relatives of officers killed could have the decedent's remains returned, but not at public expense; however, most officers remained on the battlefields, along with the enlisted men. During the Mexican–American War (1846–47), the US Army by necessity buried their dead on the battlefield. The State of Kentucky subsequently funded the return of its dead to a cemetery dedicated to the Mexican–American War. After the American Civil War (1861–65), the Americans initiated the process of using post-war area clearances to collect bodies and bury them in 73 national cemeteries, or 'in cemeteries by military posts or in private plots'. *Ibid.*, pp. 32, 34.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135.

<sup>31</sup> Budreau, *Bodies of War: World War I and the Politics of Commemoration in America, 1919–1933*, pp. 20–1.

<sup>32</sup> Sledge, *Soldier Dead: How We Recover, Bury, and Honor Our Military Fallen*, p. 136 and, Budreau, *Bodies of War: World War I and the Politics of Commemoration in America, 1919–1933*, pp. 42, 73–81.

<sup>33</sup> Of the 74,770 families canvassed, 43,909 indicated they would prefer to have the bodies returned to the US, 19,499 requested 'the bodies remain in Europe' while 11,362 did not respond. Budreau, *Bodies of War: World War I and the Politics of Commemoration in America, 1919–1933*, p. 47.

cemeteries or national cemeteries, such as Arlington.<sup>34</sup> To cater for those not repatriated, the Americans established a military cemetery in England and seven others in Europe. The authorities eventually arranged 30,587 overseas burials.<sup>35</sup>

The Americans' policy of repatriation encouraged some relatives of British dead to seek similar concessions.<sup>36</sup> However, there is little or no evidence to suggest the American approach inspired Australians to demand repatriation of their dead.<sup>37</sup>

Barely two decades after the First World War Australia once again answered the Empire's call and despatched land, air and naval forces to aid Britain, mainly in the Middle East, Malaya, the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. However, in 1942, with the threat posed by the Japanese, Australia's focus shifted to its own self-defence.<sup>38</sup>

The Second World War (1939–45) was a global contest, fought by forces with higher degrees of mobility than enjoyed by their predecessors. The development of new weapons and their associated platforms—armoured vehicles, ships, submarines, and aircraft—and the introduction of tactics to employ these weapons, enhanced force capabilities. The Second World War was associated with the estimated deaths of more than 60 million people.<sup>39</sup> Among the dead were 580,609 members of the British

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<sup>34</sup> Sledge, *Soldier Dead: How We Recover, Bury, and Honor Our Military Fallen*, pp. 176, 150, 210.

<sup>35</sup> D. M. Kennedy, *Over There: The First World War and American Society*, New York, NY, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 367; and, Sledge, *Soldier Dead: How We Recover, Bury, and Honor Our Military Fallen*, p. 204. Of these European cemeteries, one was located in Belgium and six in France. Kennedy, *Over There: The First World War and American Society*, p. 367.

<sup>36</sup> Budreau, *Bodies of War: World War I and the Politics of Commemoration in America, 1919–1933*, p. 42.

<sup>37</sup> Ziino, *A Distant Grief: Australians, War Graves and the Great War*, p. 83. Ziino refers to a letter dated 12 Apr. 1920, from T. Trumble, Secretary, Department of Defence, to the Private Secretary to the Prime Minister. Trumble comments that although the Americans were considering repatriation of their dead, in Trumble's assessment, this would not affect the attitude of the 'Commonwealth Government', which was 'in full accord with the Imperial War Graves Commission' regarding overseas burials. T. Trumble, [letter to the Private Secretary to the Prime Minister], 12 Apr. 1920, Melbourne, Vic., as contained in NAA: MP367/1, 446/10/3410 Part 1.

<sup>38</sup> Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, pp. 144, 165–71.

<sup>39</sup> Jalland, *Changing Ways of Death in Twentieth-Century Australia: War, Medicine and the Funeral Business*, p. 127. For example, from 15 to 20 million citizens of the Soviet Union died. Figures for German losses vary between four and seven million and Poland's official count is just over six million. Yugoslavia lost between one and one-and-a-half million, mostly civilians. Japan and China each suffered approximately two million losses. Civilians suffered inordinately. R. A. C. Parker, *The Second World War: A Short History*, New York, NY, The Oxford University Press, 1989, pp. 281–3; and, J. Summers, B. Harris and Commonwealth War Graves Commission, *Remembered: The History of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, London, UK, Merrell in association with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 2007, p. 39.



Commonwealth forces, 36% of whom the authorities failed to recover. These casualties included 40,661 Australians of whom 28,569 now lie in marked graves while the names of 12,092 others appear on memorials to the missing.<sup>40</sup>

Approximately one-quarter of Australian deaths arose from air operations. Of the 10,264 aviators who died, 6,500 were lost in Europe and North Africa, with the rest lost in the Asia-Pacific area.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, in South East Asia the Japanese captured over 22,000 Australians of whom over one-third (8,031) died in captivity.<sup>42</sup> Hence, overall 45% of Australian fatalities resulted from either air operations or incarceration.

During the Second World War, combatants usually left Army dead in the general area of the battles in which they died. Where possible comrades buried their dead, marked the graves and recorded details, including the best possible coordinates for the grave. Missing aviators, especially in South East Asia and on mainland Australia were often lost in remote locations, although slabs of wreckage sometimes helped locate the crash sites. POWs mostly died in captivity at locations far removed from the battlefields and their place of capture.

After the War, recovery efforts focused on the missing in various geographical areas within Europe, the Middle East, the Mediterranean and South East Asia.<sup>43</sup> Recoveries were particularly difficult in the dense jungles of Malaya, Burma, Borneo, PNG and the Philippines. Recoveries in Europe were more successful.<sup>44</sup> In their search for temporary burial sites, Graves Registration Units scoured the former battlefields across all theatres and areas where the enemy held POWs. Work parties exhumed the bodies, identified them where possible and reburied them temporarily until the IWGC

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<sup>40</sup> Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 'Commonwealth War Graves Commission Annual Report 2012–13', p. 43. Over the years, searchers recovered the bodies of an indeterminate number of these 12,092 missing Australians, but were unable to identify them. Hence, they remain listed as missing.

<sup>41</sup> Jalland, *Changing Ways of Death in Twentieth-Century Australia: War, Medicine and the Funeral Business*, p. 128.

<sup>42</sup> H. Nelson, *POW: Prisoners of War—Australians under Nippon*, Sydney, NSW, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 1985, p. 4; and, Jalland, *Changing Ways of Death in Twentieth-Century Australia: War, Medicine and the Funeral Business*, p. 152. By way of comparison, only 265, roughly three per cent of the 8,000 Australians captured by the Germans died, while POW. The Soviet Union and Japan were not party to the Geneva Conventions regarding POW as established by the International Committee of the Red Cross in 1929, and were therefore not legally required to follow these conventions.

<sup>43</sup> J. Eames, *The Searchers and their Endless Quest for Lost Aircrew in the Southwest Pacific*, St Lucia, Qld, University of Queensland Press, 1999, p. 18.

<sup>44</sup> Summers, Harris and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, *Remembered: The History of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, p. 39.

created permanent cemeteries.<sup>45</sup> The searchers found this process difficult and traumatic.<sup>46</sup>

At War's end, the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Casualty Section recorded 915 RAAF personnel as missing in the southwest Pacific area. The RAAF focused their search efforts on the former Dutch colonies, PNG and the Australian mainland while the Royal Air Force Missing Research and Enquiry units, with RAAF officers attached, focused on other theatres of battle. In late 1945, RAAF established the RAAF Searcher Party, led by Squadron Leader Keith Rundle, which, during three years of operation recovered 147 aircraft and the remains of more than 300 missing aircrew from the southwest Pacific area.<sup>47</sup>

Following the War, the Commonwealth Nations, including Australia, reaffirmed the policy of burying war dead in the nearest IWGC Cemetery.<sup>48</sup>

Australian authorities discontinued searching for their missing service personnel in the southwest Pacific area after 1948.<sup>49</sup> However, in some instances, historical recoveries took place. For example, in 1994 the RAAF established the ADF Forensic Recovery Team. From 1994 to 1999, the Team carried out six excavation/identification

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<sup>45</sup> J. Leemon, B. Leemon and C. Morgan, *War Graves Digger: Service with an Australian Graves Registration Unit*, Loftus, NSW, Australian Military History Publications, 2010, pp. 3–4.

<sup>46</sup> Jack Leemon described recovery operations in New Guinea as a member of 10 Australian Graves Registration and Enquiries Unit and revealed not only the degree of difficulty faced by recovery teams, but also the traumatic nature of the work. Subsequently, as Officer Commanding 26 Australian War Graves Unit, Leemon was involved with recoveries along the infamous Burma–Thailand railway where '155 cemeteries and over 10,000 graves' were located. *Ibid.*, pp. 18–64, 82–109.

<sup>47</sup> Eames, *The Searchers and their Endless Quest for Lost Aircrew in the Southwest Pacific*, p. 123. In mid-1950, Rundle was involved in the recovery of approximately 40 bodies, including 14 RAAF personnel, executed by the Japanese at Matupi on Rabaul in Nov. 1943. P. Stone, *Hostages To Freedom: The Fall of Rabaul*, Yarram, Vic., Oceans Enterprises, 1995, p. 297. Rundle retired in 1967 but the authorities later called him back into service to investigate the finding of aircraft wreckage in the Roper River area, in the southwest of the Gulf of Carpentaria. However, Rundle could not locate the related crash site. Rundle died in Townsville, Qld in 1986.

<sup>48</sup> Department of Defence, 'Defence Instruction (General) PERS 20-4: Missing-in-Action Presumed Killed: Recovery of Human Remains of Australian Defence Force Members', Canberra, ACT, Department of Defence, 1996, para. 3. Interestingly, in 1946, the IWGC arranged the transfer of all Second World War graves under their control from the Saigon Military Cemetery in French Indo-China (Vietnam) to Kranji, Singapore because 'permanent maintenance could not be assured'. Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 'Commonwealth War Graves Commission: Cemetery Details: Kranji War Cemetery', <[http://www.cwgc.org/search/cemetery\\_details.aspx?cemetery=2004200&mode=1](http://www.cwgc.org/search/cemetery_details.aspx?cemetery=2004200&mode=1)>, accessed 5 Dec. 2011.

<sup>49</sup> C. J. Griffiths and J. A. L. C. Duflou, 'Recovery of Australian service personnel missing-in-action from World War II: The work of the ADF forensic recovery team', *ADF Health*, Vol. 1, Apr., 2000, pp. 47–53. The lack of a unit dedicated to on-going recovery operations and the consequent lack of staff continuity meant knowledge gained by previous teams was often lost.

missions and successfully identified 21 of 23 Australian service members lost during the Second World War in or around PNG. In addition, the wreckage of an aircraft that disappeared in 1945 was located at an altitude of 14,200 feet on the side of a mountain range in Irian Jaya. RAAF teams visited the site in 1970, 1999 and 2005 to recover the remains of those killed.<sup>50</sup> These recovery missions after 1948 generally resulted from the discovery of crash sites and/or remains by others.<sup>51</sup>

Locating the wreckage of HMAS *Sydney* is another example of how civilian organisations stimulated interest in historical investigations. The HMAS *Sydney* famously sank off the West Australian coast, after an engagement with the German raider, HSK *Kormoran* on 19 November 1941. Six hundred and forty-five Australians and 79 Germans perished.<sup>52</sup> Over the years, public interest in the fate of the *Sydney* and her crew fluctuated.<sup>53</sup> In 2002, David Mearns, one of the world's foremost shipwreck hunters took up the challenge to locate the *Sydney*, cooperating closely with a Perth-based not-for-profit organisation, HMAS *Sydney* Search Pty Ltd. The Federal Government and two state Governments eventually agreed to support the search, providing grants totalling \$4.95 million. The searchers located the wreck of the *Sydney* on 16 March 2008.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> This aircraft was a RAAF Dakota, which disappeared in Sept. 1945, after the War's end, while travelling between Biak, on the north coast of Dutch New Guinea and Higgins Field on the northern tip of Cape York Peninsula. Approximately 30 persons were on board, including 18 former POW. Air Power Development Centre, 'Missing medical transport sparked mystery', RAAF, Canberra, ACT, <<http://airpower.airforce.gov.au/HistoryRecord/HistoryRecordDetail.aspx?rid=359>>, accessed 5 July 2013; and, P. Dunn, '18 September 1945: Crash of a C-47 Dakota on the side of Mount Carstens', *Australia @ War*, <<http://www.ozatwar.com/ozcrashes/qld150.htm>>, accessed 5 July 2013.

<sup>51</sup> Griffiths and Duflou, 'Recovery of Australian service personnel missing-in-action from World War II: The work of the ADF forensic recovery team'; and, G. Williams, 'RAAF Recovery of a Catalina aircraft A24-45 in July 1994', [e-mail to J. Bourke], 16 Nov. 2011, Canberra, ACT.

<sup>52</sup> D. L. Mearns, *The Search for the Sydney: How Australia's Greatest Maritime Mystery was Solved*, Pymble, NSW, HarperCollinsPublishers Pty Ltd, 2009, pp. 24–38.

<sup>53</sup> One body in a Carley float washed ashore on Christmas Island some months after *Sydney* was lost but authorities decided the body was not from the *Sydney*. See NAA: AA1980/700, NID 194/222 and NAA: N7, 1983/142. Island locals arranged the body's burial. Defence sponsored searchers exhumed the body in 2006 and concluded the man was actually a member of *Sydney*'s crew. *Ibid.*, pp. 112–13. In 1998, the Government conducted a parliamentary inquiry into the loss of the *Sydney*, and, in 2001, the Royal Australian Navy sponsored a seminar where researchers discussed the possible location of the wreck. Neither of these events provided conclusive outcomes. Mearns, *The Search for the Sydney: How Australia's Greatest Maritime Mystery was Solved*, pp. 80–1.

<sup>54</sup> Despite an initial lack of interest by the Navy, because of extensive and well-informed research by Mearns and his associates, and their extensive lobbying, Navy eventually lent their support to the search and in Aug. 2005, the Government funded the project with an initial grant of \$1.3 million, which they increased to \$4.2 million in 2007. The WA and the NSW

The number of American deaths in the Second World War was much greater than in the First.<sup>55</sup> Of 405,000 deaths, around 114,000 were non-battle casualties.<sup>56</sup> At War's end, approximately 79,000 Americans were unaccounted for, including those buried as unknowns, officially buried at sea or MIA.<sup>57</sup> The US began area clearance operations soon after the cessation of hostilities and these operations continued to the end of 1950.<sup>58</sup>

During the War, to avoid tying up resources supporting the War effort, US authorities debarred repatriations. Eventually, the 1946 US Congress through Public Law No. 383 legislated for the repatriation of American war dead. The authorities acknowledged the primacy of the NOK in this process. These repatriations represented a daunting task, which required the repatriation of 171,000 sets of remains. In addition, the authorities buried just over 107,000 bodies in 15 overseas cemeteries, including 13,854 in Hawaii.<sup>59</sup>

In 2009, American experts estimated they could eventually recover and identify as many as 20,000 US service personnel from the Second World War; however, national policy allows for mounting 'recovery operations only in response to information provided by non-governmental sources or foreign governments'.<sup>60</sup> As of 2014, 73,787 Americans remain unaccounted-for from the Second World War.<sup>61</sup>

Decolonisation in Asia after the Second World War fed Australia's fear of communism. Communism to the West represented 'an external, unwelcome force,

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Governments also donated \$500,000 and \$250,000 respectively. Mearns, *The Search for the Sydney: How Australia's Greatest Maritime Mystery was Solved*, pp. 80, 93, 109–10, 113–15, 157–60.

<sup>55</sup> Sledge, *Soldier Dead: How We Recover, Bury, and Honor Our Military Fallen*, p. 65; and, Summers, Harris and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, *Remembered: The History of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, p. 39.

<sup>56</sup> Chambers (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to American Military History*, p. 894.

<sup>57</sup> Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office, 'World War II', Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office, Washington, DC, <<http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo/wwii/>>, accessed 8 June 2014.

<sup>58</sup> Sledge, *Soldier Dead: How We Recover, Bury, and Honor Our Military Fallen*, pp. 71–7.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 138, 140, 151, 210.

<sup>60</sup> D. R. Graham et alia, 'Assessment of Department of Defense's Central Identification Lab and the Feasibility of Increasing Identification Rates', Alexandria, VA, Institute for Defense Analyses, 2009, p. 63. Although the Americans are not actively undertaking research and investigation of their unresolved cases from the Second World War, they indicate *external* sources are volunteering sufficient leads to enable researchers to nominate additional recovery sites.

<sup>61</sup> Personnel buried at sea are not included in this figure of 73,787 and some of the 850 listed as 'others', may be civilians. Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office, 'Service Personnel Not Recovered Following WWII', Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office, Washington, DC, <<http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo/wwii/reports/>>, accessed 17 July 2013.

inserting itself into history illegitimately and by terror'.<sup>62</sup> In 1954, President Eisenhower articulated the Domino Theory, which essentially argued communist success in one country could provide easy access to neighbouring countries, where the communists could also wage war.<sup>63</sup> This was typical of Cold War rhetoric.

The Korean War (1950–53) began in June 1950 when the Korean People's Army (KPA) of the communist DPRK invaded the Republic of Korea.<sup>64</sup> A few days after the War's outbreak, Australia's No. 77 Fighter Squadron went into action and in late September 1950, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment was deployed to Korea as the third battalion of a Commonwealth Brigade, which was part of the US-dominated UN Command.<sup>65</sup> The UN forces pushed the KPA north toward the Yalu River. A stalemate ensued but the Chinese entered the fray, resulting in the UN forces retreating to south of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. The belligerents agreed to a cease-fire in July 1953.<sup>66</sup>

The Korean War claimed the lives of just over 1,600 British Commonwealth service personnel.<sup>67</sup> The human cost to Australia was 346 dead, including 44 classified as MIA.<sup>68</sup> Two of these individuals are not technically MIA.<sup>69</sup> Of the remaining 42 men,

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<sup>62</sup> J. Murphy, *Harvest of Fear: A History of Australia's Vietnam War*, St. Leonards, NSW, Allen & Unwin, 1993, pp. 274–5.

<sup>63</sup> P. Edwards, *Australia and the Vietnam War*, Sydney, NSW, University of New South Wales Press, 2014, pp. 42–3.

<sup>64</sup> After the Second World War, America and Russia occupied the southern and northern sectors of the Korean peninsula respectively. However, the subsequent inability of either side to propose a suitable arrangement for the country's reunification led to the creation of two states that reflected the occupying nations' politics: the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the south and the north respectively. P. Dennis et alia (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to Australian Military History*, Melbourne, Vic., Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 333; and, Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, p. 209.

<sup>65</sup> The aircraft of No. 77 Fighter Squadron proved inferior to the MIG–15 jet fighters the Russians supplied to the communist forces fighting in Korea, and 77 Squadron's role became that of flying escort missions. Australia provided another battalion to Korea in Mar. 1952 and the Royal Australian Navy kept two surface ships on station throughout the War. Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, pp. 213–14.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 213. After the cease-fire, Australia maintained two battalions in Korea until Sept. 1954 and one battalion thereafter until Apr. 1956. Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, pp. 220–1.

<sup>67</sup> Imperial War Museum, 'Korean War, casualty statistics', Imperial War Museum, London, UK, <<http://archive.iwm.org.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.2488>>, accessed 4 June 2014.

<sup>68</sup> Department of Veterans' Affairs, 'Our Korean War Dead', Department of Veterans' Affairs, Canberra, ACT, <<http://www.dva.gov.au/commemorations-memorials-and-war-graves/remembering-our-war-dead/our-korean-war-dead>> accessed 27 Jan. 2015. The Australian War Memorial (AWM) records 340 persons on the Korean War Roll of Honour. Australian War Memorial, 'Search the Roll of Honour (Korean War)', AWM, Canberra, ACT, <[http://www.awm.gov.au/research/people/roll\\_of\\_honour/?Name=&ServiceNumber=&Unit=&Conflict=Korea](http://www.awm.gov.au/research/people/roll_of_honour/?Name=&ServiceNumber=&Unit=&Conflict=Korea)>, (accessed 1 Sept. 2011). Other pages on the AWM site indicate a figure of 339. Australian

two or possibly three went missing in South Korea, three were lost over water and the remainder were lost in or over either North Korea or the Demilitarised Zone.<sup>70</sup>

The policy of non-repatriation of Australian war dead continued during the Korean War. UN forces, including Australia, had the option to bury their dead in the United Nations Memorial Cemetery at Busan (Pusan); Australian authorities buried 281 Australian service personnel there. In addition, a memorial to the *44 missing* Australians stands in the Busan cemetery. Ten Australians lie in the Yokohama War Cemetery in Japan and a further 11 who died in Australia during the war are commemorated in civil cemeteries or crematoria across Australia.<sup>71</sup>

During the Korean War, 33,746 American service personnel were KIA with 8,177 listed as MIA.<sup>72</sup> The American dead were initially buried in temporary cemeteries but with the southward advance of the KPA and the Chinese forces in July–August 1950, these cemeteries were initially lost, recaptured during the UN's counter offensive and lost again as the opposing force pushed south in late 1950. Because of the enemy's ability to debar access to bodies in temporary battlefield cemeteries, the Americans discontinued their in-theatre burial policy and after December 1950, adopted a policy of *concurrent return*, whereby they removed their dead for processing

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War Memorial, 'Australian Servicemen listed as Missing-in-Action in North Korea', AWM, Canberra, ACT, <<http://www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/korea/mia/>>, (accessed 4 Sept. 2011); and, Australian War Memorial, 'Australian Servicemen Listed as Missing in Action in North Korea', Australian War Memorial, 'Korean War 1950–53', AWM, Canberra, ACT, <<http://www.awm.gov.au/atwar/korea.asp>>, (accessed 4 Sept. 2011). Grey suggests there were 339 Australian deaths attributed to the war in Korea. Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, p. 215. A reconciliation of the accepted figure of 346 with the figures quoted by these other sources has not been attempted.

<sup>69</sup> The Department of Veterans' Affairs indicates there are 44 Australians MIAs from the Korean War, referring to them as persons who have no known grave. Department of Veterans' Affairs, 'Australia's Involvement in the Korean War: Ceasefire at Panmunjom, 27 July 1953: Missing in Action', Department of Veterans' Affairs, Canberra, ACT, <<http://korean-war.commemoration.gov.au/ceasefire-at-panmunjom/australians-missing-in-action.php>>, accessed 27 June 2013. This figure of 44 includes Private Hall who was lost at sea enroute to Australia on 3 Oct. 1952 and Sub Lieutenant R. R. Sinclair who was killed-in-action on 7 Dec. 1951 and buried at sea. The AWM lists 43 men as MIA from the Korean War, but this figure includes Private Hall. Australian War Memorial, 'Australian Servicemen Listed as Missing-in-Action in North Korea'.

<sup>70</sup> P. Aylett, I. Saunders and K. Berryman, 'Australian (Army) missing-in action: Korea', [Unpublished Work], Cashmere, Qld, 2010. This compilation, currently held on DVD, draws on official documents available in the public domain. Of the 42 cases two were Navy personnel, 22 were Army members and 18 were RAAF airmen.

<sup>71</sup> Department of Veterans' Affairs, 'Our Korean War Dead'.

<sup>72</sup> Chambers (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to American Military History*, p. 849; and, Sledge, *Soldier Dead: How We Recover, Bury, and Honor Our Military Fallen*, p. 268.

outside the theatre of operations and subsequent repatriation to the US.<sup>73</sup> Most Americans preferred the repatriation of the dead to continental US as opposed to burial in 'countries . . . [that have] little love for America'.<sup>74</sup>

Following the cease-fire, Operation Glory, an exchange of bodies between the UN and the DPRK took place between July and August 1954. The UN handed over 13,528 sets of remains while receiving 4,023 sets in return.<sup>75</sup>

A series of Joint Recovery Operations between the US and the DPRK between July 1996 and May 2005 resulted in the recovery of remains of approximately 500 American soldiers.<sup>76</sup> In 2009, US military authorities estimated approximately 4,400 American MIAs were dispersed throughout North Korea.<sup>77</sup> There is no evidence of any historical investigation of the Australian MIAs from the Korean War.<sup>78</sup>

During the Malayan Emergency (1950–60), Australia suffered 15 operational fatalities. A further seven soldiers lost their lives during the Confrontation with Indonesia (1964–66).<sup>79</sup> In 1966, the Australian Defence Force declared two Army personnel as MIA during this Confrontation. The controlling HQ inserted a patrol into the area of the loss on 23 March but an 11-day search for the two men yielded a nil

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<sup>73</sup> Sledge, *Soldier Dead: How We Recover, Bury, and Honor Our Military Fallen*, pp. 40–1; and, M. J. Allen, *Until the Last Man Comes Home: POWs, MIAs, and the Unending Vietnam War*, Chapel Hill, NC, University of North Carolina Press, 2009, p. 129. Improved methods of transportation facilitated the adoption of the policy of concurrent return. Sledge, *Soldier Dead: How We Recover, Bury, and Honor Our Military Fallen*, p. 141.

<sup>74</sup> Sledge, *Soldier Dead: How We Recover, Bury, and Honor Our Military Fallen*, p. 176.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>76</sup> C. K. Quinones, 'The US–DPRK 1994 Agreed Framework and the US Army's Return to North Korea (2008)', National Committee on North Korea, Washington, DC, <[http://www.ncnk.org/resources/publications/Quinones\\_US\\_Army\\_in\\_DPRK.pdf](http://www.ncnk.org/resources/publications/Quinones_US_Army_in_DPRK.pdf)>, accessed 1 Oct. 2011, p. 25.

<sup>77</sup> Graham et alia, 'Assessment of Department of Defense's Central Identification Lab and the Feasibility of Increasing Identification Rates', p. 63.

<sup>78</sup> With the Korean MIAs, a situation pertains similar to that which existed at Gallipoli prior to Nov. 1918 wherein Australians lay on soil dominated by a foreign power. Although the Australian public sometimes expressed fears the Turks might desecrate the graves on the peninsula, this generally did not happen. Ziino, *A Distant Grief: Australians, War Graves and the Great War*, pp. 59–68 *passim*.

<sup>79</sup> Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, pp. 224, 235. The AWM databases carry different figures and use different timeframes for these conflicts. Australian War Memorial, 'Roll of Honour: Indonesian Confrontation (1962–66): Malaysia including Borneo', AWM, Canberra, ACT, <[http://www.awm.gov.au/research/people/roll\\_of\\_honour/?Name=&ServiceNumber=&Unit=&Conflict=Malayan+Emergency](http://www.awm.gov.au/research/people/roll_of_honour/?Name=&ServiceNumber=&Unit=&Conflict=Malayan+Emergency)>, (accessed 26 June 2013); and, Australian War Memorial, 'Roll of Honour: Malayan Emergency (1948–60)', AWM, Canberra, ACT, <[http://www.awm.gov.au/research/people/roll\\_of\\_honour/?Name=&ServiceNumber=&Unit=&Conflict=Malayan+Emergency](http://www.awm.gov.au/research/people/roll_of_honour/?Name=&ServiceNumber=&Unit=&Conflict=Malayan+Emergency)>, (accessed 26 June 2013). This study did not attempt to reconcile these sources since only indicative numbers are required.

result.<sup>80</sup> No records exist of any further searches for these two men during Confrontation.<sup>81</sup>

During 1961 and the first half of 1962, American and Australian officials arranged Australia's initial commitment to the Vietnam War (1962–75) and in July–August 1962, 30 members of the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam (AATTV) deployed via Saigon.<sup>82</sup> In mid-1965, the Government despatched the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Royal Australian Regiment (1 RAR) to Bien Hoa Province, northeast of Saigon.<sup>83</sup> The Army's commitment progressively increased to a three-battalion task force, designated as the 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Task Force (1 ATF), which operated mainly in Phuoc Tuy Province. The Royal Australian Navy (RAN) and the RAAF also contributed forces.<sup>84</sup> By mid-1969, Australia's commitment peaked at about 8,000 personnel. On 18 August 1971, in line with American troop reductions, the Australian Government announced its

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<sup>80</sup> Lieutenant Hudson and Private Moncrieff, both of E Troop, 2 Special Air Service Squadron, drowned in the early hours of the 21 Mar. 1966 while attempting to cross the Sekayan River in the vicinity of Kampong Entabang, 6,000 metres west of Serankang, Borneo. D. Horner, SAS: *Phantoms of the Jungle: A History of the Australian Special Air Service*, Sydney, NSW, Allen & Unwin, 1989, pp. 155–60.

<sup>81</sup> Army eventually recovered and repatriated the remains of these two men to Australia in 2010, but they are not included in this study.

<sup>82</sup> B. Davies and G. McKay, *The Men Who Persevered: The AATTV*, Sydney, NSW, Allen & Unwin, 2005, p. 20. The domino theory influenced Australia's decision to deploy troops to Vietnam. Edwards, *Australia and the Vietnam War*, p. 42. The purpose of America and her allies in Vietnam was to shore up the non-communist government of Ngo Dinh Diem, which lacked popular support. At the best, shoring up such a regime 'was a dubious course'. Murphy, *Harvest of Fear: A History of Australia's Vietnam War*, pp. 274–5. After the communist victory in 1975, Saigon became Ho Chi Min City. Although Australian combat troops were withdrawn from Vietnam in 1972, RAAF participation extended to Apr. 1975 when a detachment of C130 Hercules aircraft flew humanitarian missions to evacuate Vietnamese orphans (Operation Baby Lift) and subsequently evacuated the staff of the Australian Embassy on 25 Apr. Australian War Memorial, 'Vietnam War 1962–75', AWM, Canberra, ACT, <<https://www.awm.gov.au/atwar/vietnam/>>, (accessed 14 Oct. 2014).

<sup>83</sup> On arrival in Vietnam, 1 RAR came under operational control of the US 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade. B. Breen, *First to Fight: Australian Diggers, NZ Kiwis and US Paratroopers in Vietnam, 1965–66*, Nashville, TN, The Battery Press, Inc., 1988, p. 10; and, Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, p. 240. The 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade deployed from Okinawa in May 1965 on 'a 60-day assignment to protect the Bien Hoa Airbase' in South Vietnam. Breen, *First to Fight*, p. 21.

<sup>84</sup> The RAAF deployment began in Aug. 1964, when a flight of Caribou arrived in Vietnam. In 1966, 9 Squadron deployed to Vietnam with its utility helicopters. In Apr. 1967, 2 Squadron followed with their Canberra Bombers, which operated out of Phan Rang Airbase, as part of the US 35<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Wing. C. Coulthard-Clark, *The RAAF in Vietnam: Australian Air Involvement in the Vietnam War 1962–1975*, St Leonards, NSW, Allen & Unwin Pty Ltd, 1995, pp. 40–1, 65, 103. RAN support consisted mainly of logistical support, moving troops and heavy equipment to and from Vietnam plus a destroyer that operated with the US Seventh Fleet, mainly in the Gulf of Tonkin. The RAN also deployed a Clearance Diving Team and a flight of UH1–H helicopters. Edwards, *Australia and the Vietnam War*, pp. 183–4; and, Coulthard-Clark, *The RAAF in Vietnam: Australian Air Involvement in the Vietnam War 1962–1975*, p. 139.



intention to withdraw most of the Australian combat troops from Vietnam by Christmas.<sup>85</sup>

The Vietnam War claimed the lives of 521 Australian service personnel. Five hundred and fifteen died quickly in Vietnam or died elsewhere of wounds or illness, and these persons received appropriate commemoration.<sup>86</sup> However, the Australian Defence Force was unable to establish the fate of the other six casualties, and recorded four of them as MIA and two as KIA, Body Not Recovered (BNR). It would be thirty-six years or more until these six men were recovered—the Forgotten Six.

Over the years and with varying degrees of accuracy, various authors reported on the loss of these six men. The first two, Lance Corporal (LCPL) Parker and Private (PTE) Gillson were lost on 8 November 1965 during a close encounter with opposing forces.<sup>87</sup> Interestingly, in 1993 the name of the commander of the force that killed Parker and Gillson, Lieutenant Nguyen Van Bao became public knowledge in

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<sup>85</sup> P. Ham, *Vietnam: The Australian War*, Pymble, NSW, HarperCollins Publishers Pty Ltd, 2007, pp. 551–2. It is a furphy that the Labor Government initiated the Australian withdrawal from Vietnam. In effect, the scaling down of combat troops began in Oct. 1970 when the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion Royal Australian Regiment returned to Australia and was not replaced. The 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion Royal Australian Regiment was the last Australian combat unit to depart Vietnam, in Dec. 1971 although one Rifle Company remained at Vung Tau on protection duties until Feb. 1972. Training elements, including AATTV returned to Australia in Dec. 1972. The Australian Embassy Guard Platoon left Vietnam in mid-1973. A. Ekins and I. McNeill, *Fighting to the Finish: The Australian Army and the Vietnam War, 1968–1975*, Crows Nest, NSW, Allen and Unwin, 2012, pp. 471–3, 635–41, 656–8.

<sup>86</sup> Australian War Memorial, 'Information Sheets: Australians at War: Casualties as a Result of Service with Australian Units', AWM, Canberra, ACT, <[http://www.awm.gov.au/research/infosheets/war\\_casualties.asp](http://www.awm.gov.au/research/infosheets/war_casualties.asp)>, (accessed 23 Jan. 2010). Grey reports Australian casualties from the Vietnam War during the period 1962–72 as 423 KIA; 4 Missing, presumed dead; 74 non-battle deaths; being a total of 501 dead. Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, p. 249. Reconciliation of the figure of 501 dead as given by Grey with the figure of 521 reported by the AWM was not attempted. This study accepts the AWM figure of 521 Australian dead, for the period 3 Aug. 1962 to 29 Apr. 1975. Incidentally, this 521 includes one female, Captain Barbara Frances Black, Australian Army Nursing Corps, 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Field Hospital, who died on 3 Nov. 1971 in Fitzroy, Vic. Australian War Memorial, 'Search the Roll of Honour (Vietnam 1962–1975)', AWM, Canberra, ACT, <[http://www.awm.gov.au/research/people/roll\\_of\\_honour/?Name=&ServiceNumber=&Unit=&Conflict=Vietnam](http://www.awm.gov.au/research/people/roll_of_honour/?Name=&ServiceNumber=&Unit=&Conflict=Vietnam)>, (accessed 4 Sept. 2011).

<sup>87</sup> Breen, *First to Fight*, pp. 117–19; J. Essex-Clark, *Maverick Soldier: An Infantryman's Story*, Carlton, Vic., Melbourne University Press, 1991, pp. 114–17; and, I. McNeill, *To Long Tan*, St Leonards, NSW, Allen and Unwin, 1993, pp. 146–7. Breen takes a degree of poetic licence indicating after Gillson was shot he 'lifted the heavy gun and riddled ... [two enemy] with bullets'. Breen, *First to Fight*, p. 119. This is not what happened. Private Lawrence Domaschenz, who was advancing next to Gillson indicates after being shot, Gillson fell to the ground, 'he gasped, made some gurgling noises ... [but] made no more noise after this, nor did he move again'. M. H. Lander and R. A. Ducie, 'Court of Inquiry into Soldiers Missing in Action in the Republic of Vietnam 8 November 65', Bien Hoa, Vietnam, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Royal Australian Regiment, 1965, Statement by Private Domaschenz, as contained in NAA: B2458, 213963. Domaschenz served in Vietnam with 1 RAR from 3 June 1965 to 5 June 1966.

Australia.<sup>88</sup> On 27 September 1969, PTE Fisher fell to his death in inhospitable territory during a suspended rope extraction.<sup>89</sup> On 3 November 1970, Flying Officer (FLGOFF) Herbert and Pilot Officer (PLTOFF) Carver disappeared during a night-time bombing mission.<sup>90</sup> On 17 April 1971, LCPL Gillespie, a medic died in a helicopter crash during a combat aero-medical evacuation in the Long Hai Hills, currently known by the Vietnamese as the 'Minh Dam Mountains'.<sup>91</sup>

Australian forces restricted their heroic but fruitless combat recovery efforts to Gillson and Gillespie.<sup>92</sup> Available ground forces, supported by RAAF aircraft were also unsuccessful in their post-combat recovery efforts to locate Fisher.<sup>93</sup> Australian and US aircrew undertook post-combat recoveries in the cases of Herbert and Carver but failed to find any trace of the men or their aircraft.<sup>94</sup> Australian forces did not undertake any post-combat recovery operations to retrieve the bodies of Parker, Gillson or Gillespie.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> McNeill, *To Long Tan*, pp.146–7.

<sup>89</sup> Horner, *SAS: Phantoms of the Jungle: A History of the Australian Special Air Service*, pp. 334–7; G. McKay, *Sleeping with Your Ears Open: On Patrol with the Australian SAS*, St Leonards, NSW, Allen & Unwin, 1999, pp. 225–7; and, Ekins and McNeill, *Fighting to the Finish: The Australian Army and the Vietnam War, 1968–1975*, p. 334. McKay's account is sketchy, being based on interviews with the commander of Fisher's patrol and another person who McKay indicates was a patrol member. Official sources do not list this other person as a patrol member.

<sup>90</sup> Coulthard-Clark, *The RAAF in Vietnam: Australian Air Involvement in the Vietnam War 1962–1975*, pp. 205–6. This account by Coulthard-Clark, drawing mainly on official records is well researched and accurate.

<sup>91</sup> I. McNeill, *The Team: Australian Army Advisers in Vietnam 1962–1972*, Canberra, ACT, Australian War Memorial, 1984, pp. 454–5; Coulthard-Clark, *The RAAF in Vietnam: Australian Air Involvement in the Vietnam War 1962–1975*, pp. 154–5; P. Haran, *Shockwave: An Australian Combat Helicopter Crew in Vietnam*, Frenchs Forest, NSW, New Holland Publishers, 2004, pp. 88–95; and, G. Lockhart, *The Minefield: An Australian Tragedy in Vietnam*, Crows Nest, NSW, Allen & Unwin, 2007, pp. 232–3. McNeill's account is flawed and differs from available historical records and accounts rendered by others. Gillespie suffered incineration in a fuel-fed fire: small arms fire did not kill him. NAA: B2458, 3170244. Furthermore, McNeill refers to three crewmembers on the helicopter, besides Gillespie: There were four crewmembers on board besides Gillespie. Coulthard-Clark cites McNeill as one of his sources for his description of the Gillespie loss incident and inadvertently accepts the errors in McNeill's work. The account provided by Haran, based largely on anecdotal evidence, is incorrect in a number of areas. Haran even incorrectly referred to John Gillespie as 'Peter Gillespie'. Haran, *Shockwave: An Australian Combat Helicopter Crew in Vietnam*, p. 90.

<sup>92</sup> Breen, *First to Fight*, p. 119; Coulthard-Clark, *The RAAF in Vietnam: Australian Air Involvement in the Vietnam War 1962–1975*, pp. 154–5; and, Lockhart, *The Minefield: An Australian Tragedy in Vietnam*, p. 233.

<sup>93</sup> Horner, *SAS: Phantoms of the Jungle: A History of the Australian Special Air Service*, pp. 336–7.

<sup>94</sup> Coulthard-Clark, *The RAAF in Vietnam: Australian Air Involvement in the Vietnam War 1962–1975*, p. 207.

<sup>95</sup> Breen, *First to Fight*, p. 127; and, Essex-Clark, *Maverick Soldier: An Infantryman's Story*, p. 117. The enemy's prolific use of captured Australian mines in the area of the Gillespie loss

The lack of post-combat recovery operations to secure the bodies of Parker and Gillson caused considerable angst among their comrades.<sup>96</sup> 'Professional pride was at stake. The Australian code of infantry soldiering demanded that bodies were not left to the enemy.'<sup>97</sup> This creed, often attributed to the Americans, articulates the moral obligation to recover bodies from the battlefield.<sup>98</sup> However, the number of dead *left to the enemy* during earlier wars suggests the imperative to recover the dead is at best a noble sentiment, and one that is often difficult to put into action.<sup>99</sup>

Prior to January 1966, in accordance with extant policy the Australian Defence Force buried 10 Australians from the Vietnam War in Terendak, Malaysia and one in Singapore.<sup>100</sup> During this period, there was the provision for the repatriation of bodies

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incident made any post-combat recovery operations exceedingly risky. Furthermore, because the fire in the burning helicopter would have consumed most of Gillespie's remains, HQ 1 ATF assessed post-combat operations were not justified.

<sup>96</sup> Parker and Gillson were not the only two men left behind after a close encounter with the enemy. Australian forces abandoned fifteen soldiers, presumed KIA, when D Company of the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion Royal Australian Regiment withdrew from the Battle of Long Tan, on the evening of 18 Aug. 1966. By mid-morning the following day, Australian forces recovered 13 bodies and 'two wounded, Jim Richmond and Barry Meller, alive, untouched by the VC'. H. Smith, 'No time for fear', *Wartime, Official Magazine of the Australian War Memorial*, Issue No. 35, Canberra, ACT, <<http://www.awm.gov.au/wartime/35/article/>>, accessed 15 July 2011. Terry Burstall, a member of D Company of the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion Royal Australian Regiment recalled that during Operation Bribie on 17 Feb. 1967, the Australians left a number of bodies on the battlefield overnight and during a sweep through the area next day, 'one B Company soldier was found alive' and all of 'the bodies of our . . . boys were found'. T. Burstall, *A Soldier Returns: A Long Tan veteran discovers the other side of Vietnam*, St Lucia, Qld, University of Queensland Press, 1990, p. 9.

<sup>97</sup> Breen, *First to Fight*, p. 126.

<sup>98</sup> In a battle in Nov. 1965 during which elements of the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division (Airmobile) faced off to 33<sup>rd</sup>, 66<sup>th</sup> and 320<sup>th</sup> Regiments of the People's Army of Vietnam during the Battle of the Ia [River] Drang Valley, in the Central Highlands of Vietnam, the Americans left five men behind. On 6 Apr. 1966, Lieutenant Colonel Moore, who was the Commanding Officer of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment during the battle returned to the site with a small group and located the remains of eight men. Authorities subsequently identified five of those recovered as the missing 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment troopers. H. G. Moore and J. L. Galloway, *We were Soldiers Once . . . and Young: Ia Drang—The Battle that Changed the War in Vietnam*, New York, NY, Random House, 1992, pp. 320–1.

<sup>99</sup> Attempting combat or post-combat recoveries can result in additional casualties. Individuals involved should carefully evaluate the risks of recovery attempts rather than blindly subscribing to the notion demanding the recovery of bodies at all costs. Sledge, *Soldier Dead: How We Recover, Bury, and Honor Our Military Fallen*, pp. 62–4. Nevertheless, the emotional cost of leaving men on the battlefield suggests the need to attempt such recoveries where possible.

<sup>100</sup> Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia, 'Australian Vietnam Veterans Buried in Malaysia and Singapore', Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia, Minto, NSW, <<http://www.vvaa.org.au/terendak.htm>>, accessed 1 Jan. 2010.

to Australia, but not at public expense. Nevertheless, families and their supporters returned 14 men to Australia.<sup>101</sup>

In January 1966, the Australian Government responded sympathetically to societal expectations by departing from the extant Commonwealth policy and allowed, at public expense, the repatriation to Australia of 'all servicemen [sic] who die overseas, if practicable and where the next-of-kin so requests'.<sup>102</sup> Hence, in 1966, the State effectively passed ownership of the dead to those families who elected repatriation of their kin. For those repatriated to Australia, the NOK determined the burial locations. Where the NOK did not require repatriation, the authorities retained ownership of the dead by arranging burials overseas and by maintaining the graves. After the change in policy, the NOK of another 14 men KIA did not request the repatriation of their relatives and the Defence force arranged their burials at Terendak.<sup>103</sup>

After the cessation of hostilities, the loss of control of the former battlefields in Vietnam inhibited the conduct of area clearance operations by Australian and American authorities. Australia opened diplomatic relations with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) in 1973 and with the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in 1976 but it was not until 1983 that the Australian Government raised the matter of the Forgotten Six with the Vietnamese Government.<sup>104</sup> In 1984, the Government sent a mission to Vietnam in an unsuccessful effort to obtain information regarding the missing men.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> There are a number of heart-warming accounts of how individuals funded these repatriations. For example, Mr Ron Wiggins, a Sydney businessman paid for the return of Private W. L. Nalder's body in July 1965. Breen, *First to Fight*, p. 65. Nalder was one of my soldiers and was the first 1 RAR man killed-in-action. AATTV members took up a collection to fund the return Warrant Officer R. A. Scott's body to Australia in Sept. 1965. McNeill, *The Team: Australian Army Advisers in Vietnam 1962–1972*, pp. 127–9.

<sup>102</sup> Cabinet imposed two important caveats on their decision in 1966. First, the arrangements for repatriation apply 'for conditions short of war or defence emergency' and second, 'if numbers [of bodies to be repatriated] were to become unmanageable, the principle of return at public expense could not apply'. NAA: A5827, Volume 38/Agendum 1197. Hence, Australians did not have and still do not have, an unequivocal guarantee the State will repatriate the country's overseas war dead.

<sup>103</sup> Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia, 'Australian Vietnam Veterans Buried in Malaysia and Singapore'. These 14 men represented almost three per cent of those who lost their lives in Vietnam after the policy change.

<sup>104</sup> Ekins and McNeill, *Fighting to the Finish: The Australian Army and the Vietnam War, 1968–1975*, p. 559.

<sup>105</sup> Coulthard-Clark, *The RAAF in Vietnam: Australian Air Involvement in the Vietnam War 1962–1975*, p. 208; and, Ekins and McNeill, *Fighting to the Finish: The Australian Army and the Vietnam War, 1968–1975*, pp. 559–60, 687. A request by the US to Australia most likely motivated the Australian Government to despatch this mission. In mid-1982, the US secretary of

During 2007 to 2009, searchers eventually recovered the remains of the Forgotten Six. In 2007, OAH discovered the remains of Parker and Gillson.<sup>106</sup> In late 2007, a Government team, assisted by OAH, recovered some of Gillespie's remains.<sup>107</sup> In the same year, an Army investigation team, assisted by Vietnamese veterans recovered Fisher's dog tags and a 'small quantity of human remains'.<sup>108</sup> RAAF were slow to take up the challenge to find Herbert and Carver but because of persistent lobbying by OAH and others, RAAF decided in late 2008 to initiate recovery efforts. The ADF searchers recovered remains of Herbert and Carver in mid-July 2009.<sup>109</sup>

Although of little consequence, some accounts of the men's recovery are inaccurate.<sup>110</sup> What is important is in the space of 27 months searchers recovered the remains of the Forgotten Six and the Australian War Memorial (AWM) Roll of Honour now lists all six as KIA.<sup>111</sup>

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State, George Schultz, requested the assistance of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and a number of close allies and friends of the US to use their influence with Vietnam to encourage their cooperation on the recovery of American MIA. P. D. Mather, *MIA: Accounting for the Missing in Southeast Asia*, Washington, DC, National Defense University Press, 1994, p. 92.

<sup>106</sup> Ham, *Vietnam: The Australian War*, pp. 649–50; Inglis assisted by Brazier, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape*, pp. 472–4; Ekins and McNeill, *Fighting to the Finish: The Australian Army and the Vietnam War, 1968–1975*, p. 560; and, D. Hurst, *Magpies in Vietnam: Canberra Bomber Operations in Vietnam and the Recovery of a Lost Crew Thirty-nine years later*, Geelong, Vic., Barrallier Books, 2012, p. 71.

<sup>107</sup> Ekins and McNeill, *Fighting to the Finish: The Australian Army and the Vietnam War, 1968–1975*, p. 560; and, Hurst, *Magpies in Vietnam: Canberra Bomber Operations in Vietnam and the Recovery of a Lost Crew Thirty-nine years later*, p. 72.

<sup>108</sup> Ekins and McNeill, *Fighting to the Finish: The Australian Army and the Vietnam War, 1968–1975*, p. 335; and, Hurst, *Magpies in Vietnam: Canberra Bomber Operations in Vietnam and the Recovery of a Lost Crew Thirty-nine years later*, p. 72.

<sup>109</sup> Hurst, *Magpies in Vietnam: Canberra Bomber Operations in Vietnam and the Recovery of a Lost Crew Thirty-nine years later*, pp. 72–8, 102–3.

<sup>110</sup> The account of establishing contact with 'the Vietnamese ministry of foreign affairs' and the assertion 'a government team unearthed ... remains ... of Parker and Gillson', as offered by Inglis is not entirely correct. Inglis assisted by Brazier, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape*, p. 473. Hurst correctly indicates OAH opened negotiations with the Vietnamese Government in 2005 and 'unearthed' the remains of Parker and Gillson in 2007. Hurst, *Magpies in Vietnam: Canberra Bomber Operations in Vietnam and the Recovery of a Lost Crew Thirty-nine years later*, pp. 69–71. The suggestion by Ekins that an American investigation team found a helicopter in the Long Hai Hills, believed to be the one in which Gillespie died, does not accurately reflect the source quoted. Ekins and McNeill, *Fighting to the Finish: The Australian Army and the Vietnam War, 1968–1975*, p. 1030, Footnote 51. Furthermore, Hurst makes it clear an OAH member, Peter Aylett located the crash site in 2004. Hurst, *Magpies in Vietnam: Canberra Bomber Operations in Vietnam and the Recovery of a Lost Crew Thirty-nine years later*, p. 72.

<sup>111</sup> Australian War Memorial, 'Search the Roll of Honour (Vietnam, 1962–1975)'.

During the years 1964 to 1973, approximately 47,300 Americans were KIA in Vietnam.<sup>112</sup> During the War, where possible American fighting formations carried out combat and post-combat recovery operations.<sup>113</sup> The US continued to employ its policy of concurrent return of the dead. In 1996, the National League of Families of Prisoners and Missing in South East Asia was formed in America and became an influential lobby group for the families of the missing or those known to be POW.<sup>114</sup>

In January 1973 and following the withdrawal of American combat forces from Vietnam, the US raised the Joint Casualty Resolution Centre (JCRC) in Saigon. With limited success, JCRC undertook field searches, excavation and recovery operations, and repatriation activities.<sup>115</sup> At War's end in April 1975, the JCRC ceased activities in Vietnam but operated elsewhere until 1992.<sup>116</sup>

In January 1973, American authorities also established the US Army Central Identification Laboratory at Camp Samae San, Thailand, with the unit's mission being to search for, recover and identify service personnel lost during the Vietnam conflict.<sup>117</sup> In 1976, the Laboratory moved to Hawaii and authorities redesignated the unit as the US Army Central Identification Laboratory Hawaii (CILHI).<sup>118</sup> In 1976, CILHI took on an

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<sup>112</sup> Chambers (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to American Military History*, p. 849.

<sup>113</sup> From 1967 to early 1973, the Americans maintained a relatively small organization, designated the Joint Personnel Recovery Centre to conduct rescue missions in Vietnam. This organisation consisted of American personnel, working with indigenous forces. Allen, *Until the Last Man Comes Home: POWs, MIAs, and the Unending Vietnam War*, p. 84.

<sup>114</sup> T. M. Hawley, *The Remains of War: Bodies, Politics, and the Search for American Soldiers Unaccounted for in Southeast Asia*, London, UK, Duke University Press, 2005, pp. 52–4.

<sup>115</sup> Although the Americans raised the JCRC in Saigon, it immediately moved to Nakhon Phanom Air Base in northeast Thailand, because of restrictions imposed by the Paris Accords regarding the number of US military personnel allowed to remain in Vietnam. Mather, *MIA: Accounting for the Missing in Southeast Asia*, pp. 7, 12. The Provisional Revolutionary Government's uncooperative attitude hindered US recovery efforts. Sledge, *Soldier Dead: How We Recover, Bury, and Honor Our Military Fallen*, p. 84; and, Hawley, *The Remains of War: Bodies, Politics, and the Search for American Soldiers Unaccounted for in Southeast Asia*, p. 56. Nevertheless, during the first 10 months of operations in 1973, JCRC teams recovered 11 sets of American remains. Mather, *MIA: Accounting for the Missing in Southeast Asia*, p. 14.

<sup>116</sup> Sledge, *Soldier Dead: How We Recover, Bury, and Honor Our Military Fallen*, pp. 82–5.

<sup>117</sup> US Army Quartermaster Museum, 'US Army Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii', <[http://www.qmfound.com/Army\\_Central\\_Identification\\_Laboratory\\_Hawaii.htm](http://www.qmfound.com/Army_Central_Identification_Laboratory_Hawaii.htm)>, accessed 12 Jan. 2009. The concept of establishing central identification facilities was not new. For example, the US had established a Central Identification Point in France in 1946 and another in Hawaii in 1947. Sledge, *Soldier Dead: How We Recover, Bury, and Honor Our Military Fallen*, pp. 100–1.

<sup>118</sup> Troop reduction negotiations between the US and Thai governments necessitated laboratory's move to Hawaii. US Army Quartermaster Museum, 'U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii'.

expanded role, which included worldwide searches for MIAs and the conduct of field investigations.<sup>119</sup>

In 1992, the US Joint Task Force for Full Accounting (JTF–FA) came into being, subsuming the JCRC.<sup>120</sup> The following year, the Americans established the Defence POW/MIA Office within the Pentagon to coordinate POW/MIA policy.<sup>121</sup>

In 1975, there were 2,585 Americans missing throughout South East Asia.<sup>122</sup> The recovery of missing Americans was an impediment to the normalisation of relations between the US and Vietnam; however, in 1985 the two countries commenced joint recovery operations.<sup>123</sup> In 1995, after the US lifted economic embargos against Vietnam and normalised diplomatic relations, Vietnam and the US engaged in a higher level of cooperation regarding MIA matters.

On 1 October 2003, JTF–FA and CILHI merged to become the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC).<sup>124</sup> By 1 June 2014, recoveries by US agencies, with assistance from Vietnam and other countries reduced the number of missing personnel attributed to the Vietnam War to 1,642.<sup>125</sup> Geography, the weather and local and international politics limited the pace of recovery operations in South East Asia.

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<sup>119</sup> Sledge, *Soldier Dead: How We Recover, Bury, and Honor Our Military Fallen*, p. 86.

<sup>120</sup> Mather, *MIA: Accounting for the Missing in Southeast Asia*, p. 183; Sledge, *Soldier Dead: How We Recover, Bury, and Honor Our Military Fallen*, p. 89; and, Allen, *Until the Last Man Comes Home: POWs, MIAs, and the Unending Vietnam War*, p. 285.

<sup>121</sup> Allen, *Until the Last Man Comes Home: POWs, MIAs, and the Unending Vietnam War*, pp. 285, 391 (Note 56).

<sup>122</sup> Sledge, *Soldier Dead: How We Recover, Bury, and Honor Our Military Fallen*, p. 274.

<sup>123</sup> Hawley, *The Remains of War: Bodies, Politics, and the Search for American Soldiers Unaccounted for in Southeast Asia*, pp. 71–9; and, Sledge, *Soldier Dead: How We Recover, Bury, and Honor Our Military Fallen*, pp. 85–6.

<sup>124</sup> JPAC is now the US Department of Defense agency responsible for conducting field operations to account for missing Americans worldwide. Allen, *Until the Last Man Comes Home: POWs, MIAs, and the Unending Vietnam War*, p. 391, Note 56. JPAC's annual operating budget is approximately \$48–50 million. Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, 'Mission and Operations', Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, <[http://www.jpac.pacom.mil/index.php?page=faq\\_opt&size=9](http://www.jpac.pacom.mil/index.php?page=faq_opt&size=9)>, accessed 22 June 2013.

<sup>125</sup> Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office, 'Current Status of Unaccounted-for Americans Lost in the Vietnam War', Defence POW/Missing Personnel Office, Washington, DC, <[http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo/news/factsheets/documents/vietnam\\_factsheet.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo/news/factsheets/documents/vietnam_factsheet.pdf)>, accessed 13 June 2014. In June 2014, 599 of the 1,275 Americans still unaccounted-for in Vietnam are in the category of 'no further pursuit', which means authorities have conclusive evidence the individual died but do not believe any remains are recoverable.

However, JPAC believes that with their current policy and level of effort they could complete recovery operations in Vietnam around 2019.<sup>126</sup>

Comparing US with Australian efforts to recover MIAs from Vietnam is incongruous. The US has far greater numbers of MIAs, a more greatly developed tradition including expectations related to repatriating their dead and the existence of a powerful lobby group. On the other hand, Australia employs a different approach to historical recovery operations.

In 1996, the ADF issued the first iteration of its policy dealing with MIA matters and enshrined their existing reactive approach to recovery operations. The initiation of investigations was dependent on other parties actually discovering remains. Evidentiary guidelines required the production of items such as 'ADF clothing or equipment ... eyewitness accounts of the burial of remains ... [or] substantiated research from military records'. Unsubstantiated hearsay evidence was insufficient grounds for the ADF to initiate investigations.<sup>127</sup> The ADF issued two further iterations of its policy—the first in January 2009, after the first four men's recovery from Vietnam and the second in September 2010. Prior to commencing an investigation, both iterations required the discovery of remains and the provision of 'strong circumstantial or cogent direct evidence' to indicate such remains are those of an ADF member.<sup>128</sup>

In summary, although Australia takes considerable care to commemorate her war dead, she is not always as diligent when it comes to recovering the remains of the missing. Historical recoveries of the missing from the First and Second World Wars often resulted from the accidental discovery of human remains. Sometimes purposeful research by private individuals or non-government agencies led to the conduct of officially backed recovery operations. After the end of hostilities on the Korean peninsula, access to the former battlefields was limited and this lack of access still

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<sup>126</sup> Continued environmental degradation of remains will make finding additional samples increasingly unlikely beyond 2019. Graham et alia, 'Assessment of Department of Defense's Central Identification Lab and the Feasibility of Increasing Identification Rates', p. 62.

<sup>127</sup> Department of Defence, 'Defence Instruction (General) PERS 20-4: Missing-in-Action Presumed Killed: Recovery of Human Remains of Australian Defence Force Members', paras 8 and 10.

<sup>128</sup> Department of Defence, 'Defence Instruction (General) PERS 20-4: Recovery of Human Remains of Australian Defence Force members: Missing-in-Action believed Dead', Canberra, ACT, Department of Defence, 2009, paras 11–12; and, Department of Defence, 'Defence Instruction (General) PERS 20-4: Recovery of Human Remains of Australian Defence Force Members: Previously Unaccounted for', Canberra, ACT, Department of Defence, 2010, para. 8. As of July 2014, the 2010 policy remains in force. B. Manns, 'Do we have any policy changes?', [e-mail to J. Bourke], 11 July 2014, Canberra, ACT.



inhibits recovery operations. Although the US undertook historical recoveries in North Korea between 1996 and 2005, Australia did not exploit the opportunity to search for Australian MIAs alongside the Americans. Historical recovery efforts related to the six MIAs from Vietnam were initially limited to an unsuccessful Australian Government mission to Vietnam in 1984. The Americans engaged the Vietnamese on the MIA issue strenuously after 1985—where was Australia? Searchers recovered the Forgotten Six from Vietnam between 2007 and 2009, but only after a private organisation, OAH led the Government to the field.

Australian authorities based their policy on the recovery of missing service personnel mainly on experiences from the First World War. These policies were, and still are reactive, relying on parties other than the ADF to identify cases that may warrant attention. Hence, during the second half of the twentieth century, despite the posturing and rhetoric of generals and politicians, private individuals and/or organisations initiated most of the successful historical recoveries. Australian Government authorities somehow failed to appreciate recoveries were achievable and during the second half of the twentieth century, they did little to actualise the country's noble sentiments regarding the recovery of the missing.

There has been no comprehensive study across time of Australia's public policy on the question of how the war dead might be recovered and safely interred. Changes took place unnoticed in the scholarly literature and we bring these matters to attention for the first time.

## ***WARS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY AND THEIR AFTERMATH***

Wars create social distress and upheaval, even for those not on the actual field of battle. Furthermore, wars do not end with the cessation of hostilities; rather, long after a war's end, its repercussions continue to shape the cultural and physical attributes of a society.<sup>129</sup> Although war shaped Australia's social landscape markedly during the twentieth century, other factors contributed to societal change. Some factors, such as the secularisation of Australian society were internal matters, while other influences came from far afield. For example, Australians witnessed the dismantling of the British Empire, significant changes in Australian foreign policy, increased immigration and unprecedented technological advances. Except for those who ventured overseas to take part in the fighting, the Australian population experienced the wars of the twentieth

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<sup>129</sup> Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, p. 5.

century from a distance, apart from minor incursions onto the mainland by the Japanese during the Second World War. Nevertheless, after the wars ended, returning service personnel and those at home who had lost loved ones or friends carried the scars of their experiences for many years. Within this continually evolving social context, Australians dealt with the aftermaths of the various wars and collectively and individually mourned their dead.

We need therefore to examine the Australian experience during the wars of the twentieth century, paying particular attention to attitudes to death, bereavement and grief and to the lot of returning veterans and their families. The work of scholars such as Acton, Garton, Jalland, Inglis and Ziino have produced a consensus about the ways in which Australians dealt with horrific wartime casualties, particularly from the First World War.

Colonists from Britain and Ireland during the nineteenth century grounded Australians' attitudes toward death and associated rituals within Christianity. This was particularly the case for the urban middle class and the upper echelons of the working class. Experiencing a *good death* involved the person dying at home in the presence of family members, to whom the dying offered final farewells. However, the influence of Christianity within Australian society began to decline in the 1870s, particularly in rural areas and among the less affluent. Catholicism was more robust than other denominations in resisting 'challenges of scientific rationalism and evolutionary theory'.<sup>130</sup>

During wartime, governments necessarily construct national narratives to manufacture public consent to maintain the war effort and to provide socially acceptable prescriptions for grief and mourning. These 'constructions of mourning', during a particular war and in its aftermath differ between wars, because of different 'cultural discourses'.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Jalland, *Changing Ways of Death in Twentieth-Century Australia: War, Medicine and the Funeral Business*, pp. 5–7.

<sup>131</sup> C. Acton, *Grief in Wartime: Private Pain, Public Discourse*, New York, NY, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, pp. 2, 3, 6. While these national narratives operate, 'experience of wartime grief is thus often hidden until the cultural context post-war allows it to be revealed'. Acton, *Grief in Wartime: Private Pain, Public Discourse*, p. 56.

During the first few decades of the twentieth century, the majority of Australians saw themselves as part of the British Empire—'independent Austral Britons'.<sup>132</sup> These ties influenced Australian society and culture as well as Australia's international relationships, with Britain determining imperial foreign policy.<sup>133</sup> Against this backdrop, Australians eagerly embraced participation in the First World War, viewing it 'as a purifying and regenerative force in society'.<sup>134</sup> Initially, they saw the War as 'noble and heroic' and demonstrated 'patriotic enthusiasm for God, glory and Empire'; however, as the casualty lists grew, disillusionment set in. From a complement of 300,000 Australians who served abroad from a population of fewer than five million, over 62,000 died.<sup>135</sup>

During the First World War, the State's narrative limited the range of mourning behaviours, silencing grief narratives that opposed the pro-war stance.<sup>136</sup> The official narrative subordinated the horrors of war, the death and mutilation, which the authorities translated into sacrifice and duty. Casualties were often understated.<sup>137</sup> The established church still occupied an influential position in Western societies early in the twentieth century and promoted 'the ideology of sacrifice', providing a 'rhetoric of consolation'.<sup>138</sup> The bereaved used the 'rhetoric of patriotism to reassure themselves that their ... [relatives] did not die in vain'.<sup>139</sup> Furthermore, by accepting the State's rhetoric, the bereaved manufactured 'consent to [his or] her own bereavement'.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, p. 82. Australians saw no contradiction between their identity as 'Australians' and their loyalty to the Empire. The phrase, 'independent Austral Britons' was popularised by Sir William Hancock (1898–1988).

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>134</sup> J. Beaumont, 'Australia's war', in J. Beaumont (ed.), *Australia's War 1914–18*, St Leonards, NSW, Allen & Unwin, 1995, p. 4.

<sup>135</sup> Jalland, *Changing Ways of Death in Twentieth-Century Australia: War, Medicine and the Funeral Business*, p. 127; and, Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 'Commonwealth War Graves Commission Annual Report 2012–13', p. 43.

<sup>136</sup> Acton, *Grief in Wartime: Private Pain, Public Discourse*, pp. 22–3.

<sup>137</sup> As an example of understating casualties, after the attack at Fromelles in July 1916 the official communiqué released by British authorities referred to the encounter as 'some important raids' and subsequent reports in Australian newspapers referred to the Australian loss as 'slight' or 'severe'. The actual number of Australians killed, wounded or missing amounted to 5,355. Lindsay, *Fromelles: Australia's Darkest Day and the Dramatic Discovery of our Fallen World War One Diggers*, pp. 151–4, 143.

<sup>138</sup> Acton, *Grief in Wartime: Private Pain, Public Discourse*, p. 24.

<sup>139</sup> Jalland, *Changing Ways of Death in Twentieth-Century Australia: War, Medicine and the Funeral Business*, pp. 76–7.

<sup>140</sup> Acton, *Grief in Wartime: Private Pain, Public Discourse*, p. 38.

Throughout the War, the authorities discounted the horrific conditions encountered by the men in the trenches, expecting the soldiers to continue functioning despite enduring unspeakable levels of stress. The troops muted their grief as they experienced the hideous deaths of fellow soldiers and feared for their own lives. Mass casualties, mainly young men, contributed to a 'new model of suppressed, privatised grieving which affected Australians deeply across the next half century'. This repression of grief flowed from the combatants to the bereaved at home and soldiers often 'urged their families to grieve for them silently if they died'. Public rhetoric and the attitudes of returned service personnel taught the bereaved to restrain their emotional responses to wartime deaths and to show the stoical 'stiff upper lip'.<sup>141</sup> Hence, this proclivity to disengage from death, death denial, represents the first cultural shift in attitudes toward death during the twentieth century.

Historically, Western society has privileged women, particularly mothers, as mourners.<sup>142</sup> During the First World War, the authorities issued the *Mothers and Widows Badge* to the mothers and/or the widows of service personnel killed in action, or who died of wounds or other causes while on active service, or who died from war-related wounds or sickness after discharge.<sup>143</sup> Furthermore, society did not expect men to grieve openly in public and wives, by respecting their husbands' self-imposed silence regarding their wartime experiences, contributed unknowingly to inhibiting the open expression of grief by males.<sup>144</sup>

During and after the First World War, as the bereaved dealt with the deaths of relatives and friends particular events, places and artefacts became significant.

Approximately 42% of bereaved parents never knew the details of their sons' deaths.<sup>145</sup> Where authorities were able to confirm death, even if the body was not available, the bereaved were able to commence grieving. However, with missing personnel, where death was often not confirmed and even where death was highly

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<sup>141</sup> Jalland, *Changing Ways of Death in Twentieth-Century Australia: War, Medicine and the Funeral Business*, pp. 75, 171, 104–5.

<sup>142</sup> Acton, *Grief in Wartime: Private Pain, Public Discourse*, pp. 7, 105.

<sup>143</sup> Australian War Memorial, 'The Mothers and Widows Badge', AWM, Canberra, ACT, <[http://www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/badges/mothers\\_widows/](http://www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/badges/mothers_widows/)>, (accessed 12 Feb. 2014).

<sup>144</sup> Jalland, *Changing Ways of Death in Twentieth-Century Australia: War, Medicine and the Funeral Business*, p. 188.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 41–2.

probable, 'no final enactment of a leave taking' was possible.<sup>146</sup> Some parents endured years of anguish, wondering if their missing sons were 'blown to bits or buried alive.'<sup>147</sup>

Funerals help confirm death and allow the bereaved 'to receive communal support and affirmation'.<sup>148</sup> Because of the scale of death during the First World War and in some instances the inability to recover and identify the dead, the traditional avenues of mourning such as the funeral were not available and the bereaved experienced a lack of 'closure'.<sup>149</sup> The policy of non-repatriation of the Empire's war dead precluded Australians attending their relatives' funerals.<sup>150</sup> Without the funeral, the bereaved were in an emotional 'state of limbo'.<sup>151</sup>

With the burial of Australian war dead overseas, mourners became obsessed with the details of the gravesite.<sup>152</sup> Soldiers remaining in the particular theatre often provided details regarding death and burial. However, the bereaved 'were not passive in their grief, and ... communication ... [with those at the front] was not just common, but compulsive'. After the War, as the searchers scoured the battlefields, some at home waited in anticipation but eventually abandoned hope with the cessation of clearance operations.<sup>153</sup>

Irrespective of religious beliefs, graves became a significant component of the grieving process. First, graves provided a venue for Christian burial rituals, which enabled mourners to pay their respects to the dead. Second, the graves provided a focus for grief and offered a space for recalling and maintaining memories of the deceased. Those who mourned the missing attempted to connect with the graves by imagining a burial site, which assisted them in adapting to their loss. National memorials provided a lesser degree of solace than did the grave. During and in the years following the War, bereaved relatives considered extremely remote the possibility

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<sup>146</sup> Acton, *Grief in Wartime: Private Pain, Public Discourse*, p. 71.

<sup>147</sup> Jalland, *Changing Ways of Death in Twentieth-Century Australia: War, Medicine and the Funeral Business*, pp. 41–2.

<sup>148</sup> Ziino, *A Distant Grief: Australians, War Graves and the Great War*, p. 13.

<sup>149</sup> J. Damousi, 'Mourning practices', in J. Winter (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the First World War, Volume III, Civil Society*, Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press, 2014, pp. 358–60.

<sup>150</sup> Jalland, *Changing Ways of Death in Twentieth-Century Australia: War, Medicine and the Funeral Business*, p. 41.

<sup>151</sup> Damousi, 'Mourning practices', p. 360.

<sup>152</sup> Damousi, *The Labour of Loss: Mourning, Memory and Wartime Bereavement in Australia*, p. 162; and, Jalland, *Changing Ways of Death in Twentieth-Century Australia: War, Medicine and the Funeral Business*, p. 140.

<sup>153</sup> Ziino, *A Distant Grief: Australians, War Graves and the Great War*, pp. 8, 189.

of being able to visit their loved one's grave.<sup>154</sup> With the missing, the families did not even have the *prospect* of visiting a grave. Those who possessed details of the graves had the assurance that the authorities had at least recovered the bodies of their loved ones. However, in the final analysis these two groups suffered in common because of the battlefields' remoteness from Australia.

Early in the War, because of the bereaveds' inability to attend their loved ones' funerals or to visit their graves and/or the lack of information about the death event, the bereaved devised 'additional or alternative forms of remembrance' to assist in dealing with their loss. At the private level, such forms included collecting memorabilia—photographs and letters from the deceased and their comrades, records of service, obituary notices and photographs of the grave.<sup>155</sup>

Some found comfort by referencing their Christian faith. However, among the soldiers on the Front and at all levels of Australian society, considering the gamut of wealth and standing, many questioned the value of religion.<sup>156</sup>

After the First World War, many of the bereaved saw the ideology of sacrifice as a sham and concluded 'that their innocent belief in duty, honour and country had been manipulated by politicians'.<sup>157</sup> During the inter-war years, those who were adults during the First World War suppressed their sorrow and kept their grief private, often for lengthy periods. The younger generations laboured under the burden of all-consuming grief of two decades and some 'determined to try to forget sorrow—to grieve quickly ... [and] quietly'.<sup>158</sup> Thus, the culture of death denial persisted and experiences of grief and loss and residual psychological damage carried forward from the First to the Second World War.<sup>159</sup>

Advances in medicine contributed to this culture of death denial. Pharmacology provided new drugs, such as sulfonamide in the 1930s, to treat many conditions, to

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid., pp. 13, 10, 34, 4.

<sup>155</sup> Acton, *Grief in Wartime: Private Pain, Public Discourse*, p. 23.

<sup>156</sup> Jalland, *Changing Ways of Death in Twentieth-Century Australia: War, Medicine and the Funeral Business*, pp. 6, 42; and, Ziino, *A Distant Grief: Australians, War Graves and the Great War*, p. 33.

<sup>157</sup> Acton, *Grief in Wartime: Private Pain, Public Discourse*, p. 83.

<sup>158</sup> Jalland, *Changing Ways of Death in Twentieth-Century Australia: War, Medicine and the Funeral Business*, pp. 106, 172.

<sup>159</sup> Acton, *Grief in Wartime: Private Pain, Public Discourse*, p. 47; and, Jalland, *Changing Ways of Death in Twentieth-Century Australia: War, Medicine and the Funeral Business*, p. 171.

prolong life and to avoid facing death.<sup>160</sup> Moreover, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s, improved hospital systems encouraged the movement of the terminally ill out of home-care into purpose-built facilities, removing death from public view and reinforcing the culture of death denial.<sup>161</sup>

The scholarly interest in war grief and mourning also encompasses the Second World War, with the work of historians such as Damousi, Garton and Stanley. On the evening of Sunday 3 September 1939, Australians who in the main still felt allegiance to the British Empire generally accepted the declaration of war by Prime Minister Menzies.<sup>162</sup> However, in contrast to the previous War, Australia's entry into the Second World War did not carry the fervour of 1914 and furthermore, as the Second World War progressed support grew.<sup>163</sup>

Compared to the First World War, Australian casualties during the Second World War were lower albeit still substantial. Over 500,000 served outside Australia, out of a population of seven million and 40,661 died.<sup>164</sup>

With 45% of fatalities resulting from either air operations or incarceration, many families suffered grief that was protracted and traumatic because of the ambiguity surrounding such losses, not knowing whether their relatives were dead or alive or whether they were POW, unable to advise their families of their whereabouts.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Jalland, *Changing Ways of Death in Twentieth-Century Australia: War, Medicine and the Funeral Business*, p. 370. The discovery of penicillin in 1940 was a more important breakthrough. The two World Wars stimulated medical research and advances during the 1940s and 50s were wide-ranging. G. Blainey, *A Short History of the 20th Century*, London UK, Penguin Books Ltd, 2005, pp. 392–7. Such advances continued throughout the twentieth century further enabling people to avoid dying—at least in the interim.

<sup>161</sup> Jalland, *Changing Ways of Death in Twentieth-Century Australia: War, Medicine and the Funeral Business*, p. 370.

<sup>162</sup> J. Penglase and D. Horner, *When the War came to Australia: Memories of the Second World War*, St Leonards, NSW, Allen & Unwin, 1992, pp. 1–3; J. Beaumont, 'Australia's war: Europe and the Middle East', in J. Beaumont (ed.), *Australia's War 1939–45*, St Leonards, NSW, Allen & Unwin, 1996, pp. 1–3; and, Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, pp. 144–5.

<sup>163</sup> Jalland, *Changing Ways of Death in Twentieth-Century Australia: War, Medicine and the Funeral Business*, p. 127.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., p. 127; and, Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 'Commonwealth War Graves Commission Annual Report 2012–13', p. 43.

<sup>165</sup> Jalland, *Changing Ways of Death in Twentieth-Century Australia: War, Medicine and the Funeral Business*, p. 128. POWs who returned in 1945 had been away from their families for four or five years and had minimal opportunity to communicate with relatives, depending mainly on the POW camp's location. Nelson, *POW: Prisoners of War—Australians under Nippon*, pp. 207–8. One notable exception amongst the POW internment facilities regarding the harshness of conditions was Zentsuji in northern Shikoku. Mail deliveries were frequent and food was good. Nelson, *POW: Prisoners of War—Australians under Nippon*, p. 177.

A new element emerged in 1941. The unprecedented psychological trauma brought on by the possibility of a Japanese invasion affected many Australians. After the Japanese attack on the American fleet at Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941 and the subsequent rapid capture of Singapore, Burma and the islands to the north and northwest of Australia, Australians were justified in believing a Japanese invasion of the mainland was imminent. They were now defending their own country. Japanese air and naval power applied to mainland Australia provided a further rational basis for such a belief.<sup>166</sup> The Australian Government played down the scale of these incursions.<sup>167</sup> However, the Japanese did not intend to invade mainland Australia.<sup>168</sup> The successful breaking of the Japanese codes by the British and the Americans meant the Allies were generally aware of Japanese intentions in early 1942.<sup>169</sup> It was not until 9 July 1943 that Prime Minister Curtin finally revealed publicly that the Japanese did not intend to invade Australia.<sup>170</sup>

The grief of the First World War extended to and merged with the 'anticipated and experienced' grief of the Second World War.<sup>171</sup> The continuity of the denial response and its increasing strength is evident in the soldiers' letters. They frequently implored those at home 'not to grieve'. During the Second World War, letter writers offered this injunction more often than was apparent in letters of the previous War. Hence, the Second World War reinforced the prevalence of chronic grief, which

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<sup>166</sup> The Japanese first attacked Darwin on 19 Feb. with the loss of 243 lives. J. Beaumont, 'Australia's war: Asia and the Pacific', in *Australia's War 1939–45*, p. 30. They subsequently attacked Broome in Mar., destroying a number of Flying Boats anchored in the Harbour. P. Stanley, *Invading Australia*, Camberwell, Vic., Penguin Group, 2008, p. 108. Japanese aircraft attacked other northern towns, including Townsville, and on 31 May and 1 June, three midget submarines infiltrated Sydney Harbour. J. Beaumont, *Australia's War 1939–45*, p. xvi. On 8 June, a Japanese submarine fired 10 shells, aimed at the Sydney Harbour Bridge but most shells landed in the water or in the eastern suburbs and only one detonated. Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, p. 179.

<sup>167</sup> As an example of playing down the scale of Japanese incursions, the attack on Broome was not widely reported even though sources estimated as many as 70 civilian evacuees from the Netherlands East Indies might have died. Stanley, *Invading Australia*, p. 108.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156.

<sup>169</sup> Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, p. 178; Stanley, *Invading Australia*, p. 157; and, Beaumont, 'Australia's war: Asia and the Pacific', p. 36. Although 'Macarthur and a few of his staff knew [of Japan's intentions], few other officers or ministers did—and among Australians perhaps only Blamey, Shedden (Secretary of the Department of Defence) and Curtin' were aware of the situation. Stanley, *Invading Australia*, p. 158.

<sup>170</sup> Stanley, *Invading Australia*, p. 187. Understandably, making such information publicly available would have heralded to the Japanese that the Allies broke their codes. Another reason why it was desirable not to inform the Australian public of Japan's intentions was the Government did not want to dilute the war effort.

<sup>171</sup> Acton, *Grief in Wartime: Private Pain, Public Discourse*, p. 47.



remained unresolved. Such grief manifested particularly among the relatives of the missing soldiers from the First World War and subsequently among the kin of missing aviators and prisoners of the Japanese.<sup>172</sup> These families felt abandoned, forlorn and bereft of hope.

The desire to know the circumstances of their loved one's death and the place of burial, if known, again emerged during the Second World War.<sup>173</sup> Unless death occurred on mainland Australia, the inability to attend their loved ones' funerals to say a final farewell exacerbated the trauma suffered by the bereaved.

During the Second World War, Australian society confirmed the primacy of women mourners. Authorities issued a badge, similar to the one struck during the previous War, to mothers of deceased male and female service personnel. Likewise, widows received a badge to acknowledge the death of their husbands on active service.<sup>174</sup>

In 1940, the wives of six service officers founded the AIF Widows Association in Melbourne. In late 1945, Jessie Vassey and her colleagues formed the War Widows Craft Guild in Melbourne and two years later Vassey and her associates established the War Widows Guild as a national body.<sup>175</sup> Initially membership was restricted to Second World War widows but in 1947, the War Widows Guild granted the older widows associate membership.<sup>176</sup>

For many women, the wartime loss of their husbands in a sacrificial context understandably constituted an important component of their identity as war widows. Widows often drew on 'nostalgic memories' and idealised their lost soldier-husbands, attempting to deny their death. In addition, it was difficult for many widows to progress their grieving because the prevailing culture of death denial inhibited the open expression of grief.<sup>177</sup> Furthermore, despite society's acknowledgement of the primacy

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<sup>172</sup> Jalland, *Changing Ways of Death in Twentieth-Century Australia: War, Medicine and the Funeral Business*, p. 171.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 136–51, 162–70.

<sup>174</sup> Australian War Memorial, 'The Mothers and Widows Badge'. Post-war deaths from the Second World War did not create the entitlement for the award of a Mother's or Widow's Badge.

<sup>175</sup> Jessie Vassey was the widow of Major General George Vassey who died in a plane crash near Cairns, Qld on 5 Mar. 1945. M. T. Clark, *No Mean Destiny: The Story of the War Widows' Guild of Australia, 1945–1985*, Melbourne, Vic., Hyland House, 1986, p. 25.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4, 30–44, 95–7.

<sup>177</sup> Jalland, *Changing Ways of Death in Twentieth-Century Australia: War, Medicine and the Funeral Business*, p. 188; and, Acton, *Grief in Wartime: Private Pain, Public Discourse*, p. 42.

of women mourners, some rituals excluded them from andocentric commemorative activities, such as ANZAC Day.<sup>178</sup>

The Second World War in particular brought many changes within the international sphere and some of these changes affected Australia. During and after the War, the sway of the old colonial powers such as Britain, France and the Netherlands diminished appreciably and progressively former colonies became independent or at least obtained a more favourable level of autonomy.<sup>179</sup> The Balfour Declaration of 1926 represented the birth of the *British Commonwealth of Nations*.<sup>180</sup> The London Declaration, issued on 28 April 1949 by the governments of the British Commonwealth of Nations marked the birth of the modern *Commonwealth of Nations*.<sup>181</sup> In April 1945, world leaders representing the victors of the Second World War had gathered in San Francisco and resolved to form the United Nations, to promote international cooperation and preserve world peace.<sup>182</sup>

Australia emerged from the Second World War with an enhanced level of maturity, 'opening diplomatic relations with many countries'.<sup>183</sup> Progressively, relationships between Australia and the US assumed a more significant role, with a

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<sup>178</sup> Jessie Vassey strenuously opposed this sidelining of widows at commemorative activities and chided the authorities accordingly. Damousi, *The Labour of Loss: Mourning, Memory and Wartime Bereavement in Australia*, pp. 10–12.

<sup>179</sup> Blainey, *A Short History of the 20th Century*, pp. 311–15.

<sup>180</sup> The Balfour Declaration asserted '[Great Britain and the Dominions] are autonomous Communities within the British Empire, equal in status ... and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of nations'. P. Marshall, 'The Balfour formula and the evolution of the commonwealth', *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 90, Issue No. 361, 2001, p. 541. In Dec. 1931, the British parliament passed the Statute of Westminster, 'to give effect to certain resolutions passed by the Imperial Conferences held in the years 1926 and 1930'. Marshall, 'The Balfour formula and the evolution of the commonwealth', p. 546. However, the Australian Government did not adopt the Statute of Westminster until 1942 and did so not so much 'as a statement of the Dominion–British relationship', but to enable the Government to effectively manage the War effort and its planned reforms after the War. D. Lowe, 'Australia in the world', in J. Beaumont (ed.), *Australia's War 1939–45*, p. 166.

<sup>181</sup> The London Declaration allowed for the admission to or the continued membership of the Commonwealth, of countries who were not dominions, thereby admitting republics and indigenous monarchies. The Declaration also changed the name of the British Commonwealth to the *Commonwealth of Nations*. P. Marshall, 'Shaping the 'new commonwealth', 1949', *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 88, Issue No. 350, 1999, pp. 196–7.

<sup>182</sup> The first meeting of the General Assembly of the Nations took place in London in Jan. 1946. Blainey, *A Short History of the 20th Century*, pp. 270–1.

<sup>183</sup> Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, p. 196. The Australian Government first established its Department of External Affairs in 1935. The War hastened the Department's growth and at the War's end, the Department had 26 diplomatic staff in Canberra and 25 overseas. Lowe, 'Australia in the world', p. 179.

focus on defence and joint relationships with the emerging nations of Asia. The ANZUS Treaty of 1951 and the South East Asia Collective Security Treaty of 1954 formalised these relationships.<sup>184</sup>

The Korean War came and went largely unnoticed by Australians. Veterans and commentators often described the Korean War as the *Forgotten War*.<sup>185</sup> Initially, the Press took an interest in the War as opposing forces manoeuvred up and down the peninsula, but interest declined when the War entered its static phase.

Australian casualties during the Korean War were small compared to earlier wars and the Australian Government did not need a national narrative to modulate the expression of grief. There was little opposition to Australia's involvement, mainly because the UN played the lead role.<sup>186</sup> However, soldiers were lost and families grieved, including the families of the 42 men declared MIA. Similarly, the Malayan Emergency and Confrontation with Indonesia attracted little public scrutiny, remembering Australian forces left two men behind in Borneo. The leading authorities in the study of Australian attitudes to post-1945 war mourning include Damousi and Garton.

In the 1950s, at least in Western societies, the notion that war is an aberration and not a normative experience gained ground, a notion encouraged by the spectre of nuclear war.<sup>187</sup> Progressively, the concept of full-scale war became unfashionable and nations managed conflicts cautiously in the context of the Cold War.

It was in this context, in 1958, that Alan Seymour wrote *The One Day of the Year*, first performed in Adelaide in July 1960.<sup>188</sup> Although the play focuses on ANZAC Day, it addresses deeper issues, including stratification of Australian society, cross-generational communication and freedom of expression, providing a worthwhile study of the Australian character in the late 1950s, at a time when the ANZAC tradition still

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<sup>184</sup> Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, pp. 215–18.

<sup>185</sup> Damousi, *Living with the Aftermath: Trauma, Nostalgia and Grief in Post-War Australia*, pp. 42–3; and, Inglis assisted by Brazier, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape*, p. 481. Korean War veterans waited until Apr. 2000 for the dedication of an Australian Korean War memorial.

<sup>186</sup> Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, p. 217.

<sup>187</sup> R. S. Laufer, 'The serial self: War trauma, identity and adult development', in J. P. Wilson, Z. Harel and B. Kahana (eds.), *Human Adaptation to Extreme Stress: From the Holocaust to Vietnam*, New York, NY, Plenum Press, 1988, pp. 34–5.

<sup>188</sup> A. Seymour, *The One Day of the Year* (1962), North Ryde, NSW, Angus and Robertson, 1976.

maintained some sway. The play reflects a degree of *war weariness* amongst a generation that had not directly experienced war.

Against this backdrop, and with a degree of acceptance or at least acknowledgement of the Domino Theory, Australia joined America to prosecute the war in Vietnam. In total, 59,521 Australians served in Vietnam, 41,957 Army, 12,858 RAN and 4,706 RAAF.<sup>189</sup>

Many civilians and some Australian Defence Force members misunderstood the Vietnam War.<sup>190</sup> The propaganda of the day highlighted the peasant in black pyjamas, who somehow commanded centre stage. During 1965 and 1966, the People's Liberation Armed Forces and the People's Army of Vietnam employed well-equipped forces in battalion and regimental strength to engage Americans and the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN), toe to toe and in daylight.<sup>191</sup> However, the intensity of operations involving Australians was generally less than that experienced by these other forces.<sup>192</sup>

During the Vietnam War, intrepid reporters brought the War into living rooms around the world. The Reuters office in Saigon serviced approximately 600

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<sup>189</sup> Ekins and McNeill, *Fighting to the Finish: The Australian Army and the Vietnam War, 1968–1975*, p. 834. Other sources offer alternate figures. For example, according to Grey, between 1962 and 1972 approximately 50,000 served in Vietnam. Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, pp. 248–9. As Ekins explains, Grey based his figures on different selection criteria, most notably the exclusion of 10,000 RAN personnel, an exclusion authorities redressed in 1985. J. R. Carroll, *Out of Sight, Out of Mind: The Royal Australian Navy in Vietnam 1965–1972*, Dural, NSW, Rosenberg Publishing Pty Ltd, 2013, p. 155.

<sup>190</sup> Australia's military masters, if they knew, could have told Australians who they were fighting, instead of using expedient terms such as 'Viet Cong' or 'VC' and 'North Vietnamese Army' or 'NVA', which did not properly describe the enemy. The 'Viet Cong' was actually the People's Liberation Armed Forces, the military wing of National Liberation Front for the Southern Region of Vietnam. The term 'NVA' referred to the People's Army of Vietnam. Lockhart, *The Minefield: An Australian Tragedy in Vietnam*, pp. xxiii–xxiv; and, W. Wilkins, *Grab their Belts to Fight Them: The Viet Cong's Big-Unit War against the US, 1965–1966*, Annapolis, MD, Naval Institute Press, 2011, p. 51. In 2007, the researcher mentioned the term 'NVA' to an official from Hanoi who responded with a blank stare and the question, 'I do not recognise the term NVA. Who were they?'

<sup>191</sup> Wilkins, *Grab their Belts to Fight Them: The Viet Cong's Big-Unit War against the US, 1965–1966*, pp. 2, 64–126, 143–94, *passim*.

<sup>192</sup> However, the Australians did take part in some notable engagements for example, the Battle of Long Tan. On the afternoon of 18 Aug. 1966, D Company of the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion Royal Australian Regiment encountered a sizeable enemy force in the area of Long Tan, less than four kilometres from the 1 ATF base. During the ensuing battle, D Company with the assistance of other Task Force elements and air support, inflicted considerable damage on the enemy, namely the Vietnamese 275 Regiment and D445 Battalion who left 245 bodies on the battlefield. Australians suffered 18 dead and 24 wounded. McNeill, *To Long Tan*, pp. 305–49.

newspapers worldwide along with numerous radio and TV stations.<sup>193</sup> Such intensive reporting, especially TV imagery, provided the public with a daily commentary on the realities of the War.

The means of personal communication between those at home and deployed combatants is a factor often overlooked when discussing the societal impacts of war. Up to and including the Vietnam War, the principal means of communication was letter writing, often through unreliable mail delivery systems and breakdowns in communication between parties sometimes occurred.<sup>194</sup> Facilities such as e-mail and mobile phones came much later.<sup>195</sup>

Australian casualties in Vietnam were not comparable to those of the two World Wars: the ratio of those killed per year per million of the population during the First World War was over 500 times that of the Vietnam War. Although the Government did not need a national narrative to modulate the expression of grief, they did however need to sustain their argument as to why Australia needed to be involved in the War. This became more necessary after the Government introduced conscription in November 1964 to meet anticipated shortages in troop levels.<sup>196</sup>

In April 1966, about 65% of the Australian population supported sending conscripts overseas, but only about 51% supported their use in Vietnam.<sup>197</sup> However, in 1966 more than 60% of those surveyed supported Australia's involvement in the War.<sup>198</sup> Dissenters, generally from the Left opposed the War mainly on ideological grounds.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> H. Lunn, *Vietnam: A Reporter's War*, St Lucia, Qld, University of Queensland Press, 1985, pp. 56–73. Reporters and photographers from both sides of the conflict operated across Vietnam in dangerous circumstances and some paid with their lives. H. Faas and T. Page (eds.), *Requiem by the Photographers who died in Vietnam and Indochina*, London, UK, Jonathan Cape, Random House, 1997, pp. 314–25.

<sup>194</sup> Ekins and McNeill, *Fighting to the Finish: The Australian Army and the Vietnam War, 1968–1975*, pp. 77–9.

<sup>195</sup> Since the late 1950s, there had been a steady development of systems and protocols to enable communications between computers and networks, leading to the creation of the Internet. Upon its introduction in the early 1970s, e-mail quickly became the predominant application within the existing environment. Particularly in the early 1990s, the Net's use for e-mail traffic continued to grow. I. P. Kaminow and T. Li, 'Growth of the internet', in K. G. Coffman and A. M. Odlyzko (eds.), *Optical Fiber Telecommunications IV: B. Systems and Impairments*, San Diego, CA, Academic Press, 2002, pp. 30–2.

<sup>196</sup> Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, p. 238.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 247.

<sup>198</sup> Support came from traditional anti-communist groups such as the RSL and some religious groups, especially the Catholic Church. *Ibid.*, p. 247. The homecoming parade of 1 RAR in June

(Continued)

Demonstrations against Australia's participation in the War and the use of conscripts began in mid-1965.<sup>200</sup> However, the Liberal conservative government won a comfortable victory in the November 1966 election, which the Opposition fought mainly on the Vietnam issue. The tone of the demonstrations was initially moderate, but progressively became 'more radical and sometimes violent', especially during 1968 and 1969.<sup>201</sup> Nevertheless, the Liberal Government retained office in the October 1969 election, although less comfortably than in 1966.<sup>202</sup>

The anti-war, anti-conscription movement staged its first Moratorium, Australia-wide on 8 May 1970 with Dr Jim Cairns as the principal spokesperson. Cairns claimed the Moratorium movement was against the war—not conscription, while others suggest conscription represented the protesters' main concern.<sup>203</sup> The Moratorium movement never commanded majority support within the Australian community at large.<sup>204</sup> Unlike their American counterparts, the organised labour movement in Australia was hostile to the nation's involvement in the Vietnam War. However, regardless of the effectiveness of the public campaigns against participation in the Vietnam War and the use of conscripts, the protest movement seeded the Australian population against the War—and against Vietnam veterans. By late 1972, the sentiment against conscription increased to a level where elements within all sectors of Australian society were questioning its relevance.<sup>205</sup> Labor won office in December: Conscription ended.

In 1973, the newly-elected Labor Government moved with an unceremonious degree of alacrity in recognising the DRV and such a rapid rapprochement caused

1966 demonstrated an appreciable level of support for the War. Murphy, *Harvest of Fear: A History of Australia's Vietnam War*, p. 148; and, Edwards, *Australia and the Vietnam War*, p. 142. It was estimated between 300,000 to 400,000 people attended the 1 RAR parade.

<sup>199</sup> Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, pp. 247–8.

<sup>200</sup> Organisers arranged 'Teach-ins' on university campuses and organisations such as 'Youth Campaign against Conscription' and 'Save Our Sons' sprung up. Edwards, *Australia and the Vietnam War*, pp. 123–5.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 123–4, 141, 199–200.

<sup>202</sup> Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, p. 248.

<sup>203</sup> J. F. Cairns, *Silence Kills*, Richmond North, Vic., Vietnam Moratorium Committee, 1970, pp. 9, 34; and, Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, p. 248. In May 1970, Melbourne alone, 70,000 people gathered and staged a peaceful protest. A second less peaceful Moratorium took place in Sept. Edwards, *Australia and the Vietnam War*, p. 224.

<sup>204</sup> In Grey's assessment, 'journalists, academics, students and intellectuals of various sorts', were the main participants in the Moratorium movement. Such individuals did not necessarily reflect 'grassroots' opinions and hence were not likely to translate 'into votes'. Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, p. 248.

<sup>205</sup> Edwards, *Australia and the Vietnam War*, p. 237.

angst among veterans. Furthermore, the Government did not accept the service of RAN personnel as qualifying service for 'benefits and repatriation entitlements', or for the issue of the Vietnam campaign medal. It was not until the period between 1985 and 1992 that the Government partly rectified these matters.<sup>206</sup>

Many veterans felt Australia's hasty withdrawal from Vietnam during 1971 and 1972 was 'less than honourable' and gave the impression that participation in the War might have been somewhat illegitimate and a military failure. Furthermore, after the fall of Saigon in 1975, some sections of the public perceived those who served in Vietnam as people of dubious character, fundamentally flawed.<sup>207</sup>

The readjustment to life in Australia for some returning service personnel proved difficult. Veterans felt doubly defeated, by the enemy and by the anti-war movement.<sup>208</sup> Because they did not receive a hero's welcome and access to the ANZAC tradition, some felt betrayed by the Government, the Returned Services League of Australia (RSL) and the community at large. Occasionally, veterans of earlier wars told returning Vietnam veterans they had not been in 'a real war'.<sup>209</sup> Nevertheless, most veterans adapted to life after Vietnam without major problems.<sup>210</sup>

At least initially, contrary to what happened during and after the two World Wars, the community at large generally offered little or no consolation to the bereaved from the Vietnam War. Without such community support to legitimise their grief, the

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<sup>206</sup> In the 1985, the Government accepted 'affected sailors were deemed to have been allotted for active service ... [but] only for the times the ships were in Vietnamese waters'. Subsequently these personnel received the Returned from Active Service Badge, but it took a further seven years before they received a campaign medal, the Vietnam Logistic and Support Medal, a different medal to that issued to shore-based personnel. Carroll, *Out of Sight, Out of Mind: The Royal Australian Navy in Vietnam 1965–1972*, pp. 155–8, 166.

<sup>207</sup> Edwards, *Australia and the Vietnam War*, pp. 248, 262.

<sup>208</sup> S. Garton, *The Cost of War: Australians Return*, pp. 232–2; and, C. Donaldson and M. Lake, 'Whatever happened to the anti-war movement?', in M. Lake and H. Reynolds (eds.), *What's Wrong with ANZAC?*, Sydney, NSW, University of New South Wales Press, 2010, p. 89.

<sup>209</sup> Edwards, *Australia and the Vietnam War*, pp. 277–9. Formed units returning from Vietnam generally staged public homecoming marches, such as those staged by 15 of the 16 battalions. Despite the unpalatable and contradictory memories of some veterans, the spectators warmly welcomed the returning servicemen. S. Garton, *The Cost of War: Australians Return*, pp. 230–1. However, service personnel replaced individually in Vietnam did not enjoy these cathartic experiences.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 280. Still, these wartime experiences took a toll on some veterans who dealt with various medical and psychological problems attributed to their service. For example, the Department of Veterans' Affairs accepted more than 14,000 Vietnam veterans suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. In earlier wars, terms such as 'Shell Shock', 'War Neurosis' or 'Combat Fatigue' described the condition now known as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

bereaved felt isolated. In addition, bereaved families' dispersal throughout the country exacerbated this isolation.<sup>211</sup>

The RSL, Australia's peak veteran organisation, had a long history, coming into existence as the Returned Sailors and Soldiers' Imperial League in 1916.<sup>212</sup> As an ostensibly apolitical organisation, the League effectively represented the interests of returned service personnel, and commentators have described the League as Australia's first national pressure group, with an agenda that included foreign policy considerations. However, by 1966, the League's effectiveness was decreasing.<sup>213</sup> In 1980, because they felt the RSL was not adequately supporting them, Vietnam veterans formed the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia (VVAA) to 'press for more recognition and better benefits'.<sup>214</sup>

Reconciliation between the community and Vietnam veterans only began in earnest 14 years after the War's conclusion, with the Welcome Home Parade in Sydney in October 1987. Australia may be strong when it comes to commemorating the sacrifices of her warriors, but Vietnam veterans had to organise their own Welcome Home Parade. Following the Parade, a group of veterans set about establishing a Vietnam War memorial—the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial—in Canberra, which was dedicated in October 1992.<sup>215</sup> The Memorial features three benches carrying the names of the Forgotten Six. A granite ring, suspended above the inner space of main structure encases a scroll listing the names of the dead.<sup>216</sup> These activities in 1987 and 1992 reflected new attitudes to mourning, well documented in the secondary literature.

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<sup>211</sup> Acton, *Grief in Wartime: Private Pain, Public Discourse*, pp. 81–2. Although Acton is specifically discussing the isolation of bereaved families in America, a similar situation clearly applied in Australia.

<sup>212</sup> L. Hills and A. Dene, *The Returned Sailors & Soldiers' Imperial League of Australia*, Melbourne, Vic., Southland Press, 1927, pp. 10–11. In 1940, the League changed its name to the Returned Sailors, Soldiers' and Airmen's Imperial League of Australia and in 1965, it became the Returned Services League of Australia.

<sup>213</sup> G. Kristianson, *The Politics of Patriotism: The Pressure Group Activities of the Returned Servicemen's League*, Canberra, ACT, Australian National University Press, 1966, pp. 225–8.

<sup>214</sup> Inglis assisted by Brazier, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape*, p. 363; and, Edwards, *Australia and the Vietnam War*, pp. 279–83.

<sup>215</sup> J. Thurgar and R. Crothers, *Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial: A Photographic History of the Dedication Weekend*, Higgins, ACT, R. W. Crothers & Associates, 1992; and, Ekins and McNeill, *Fighting to the Finish: The Australian Army and the Vietnam War, 1968–1975*, pp. 698–9.

<sup>216</sup> J. Moremon and C. Page-Allen, *Vietnam: Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial*, Canberra, ACT, Department of Veterans' Affairs, 2002, rear cover, inside page; and, Inglis assisted by Brazier, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape*, p. 472.



To exemplify changing notions of bereavement and grief, with the repatriation of the dead during the Vietnam War, artefacts and events denied to Australians bereaved from previous wars became available.

The flag-draped coffins containing the mortal remains of the dead evoked powerful emotions. In the American context during the Vietnam War, many relatives wanted to see the body 'to confirm the death'. Not seeing the body made it possible to 'prolong denial to the point where mourning was at least partly deferred'. Regardless of whether it was viewable or not, the body became the focus of grief.<sup>217</sup> Considering the cultural similarities between America and Australia during the Vietnam War, it is reasonable to assume Australians held similar feelings regarding access to the bodies.

After January 1966, the option to return the bodies to Australia enabled attendance at funerals and access to graves. The wake became one of the funeral's 'usual trappings' denied to wartime bereaved of earlier wars. After the funeral, family and friends often gathered to share recollections about the deceased and to show support for the bereaved. In addition, the wake assisted in the early initiation of vital aspects of the grieving process. Such activities are common across many cultures, but the extent of *sharing* varies.<sup>218</sup> Hence, with the repatriation of the dead from the Vietnam War, the bereaved whose kin the Government repatriated had access to significant artefacts and events. However, the families and the comrades of the missing had no such opportunities.

The culture of death denial persisted within Australian society until the 1970s, after the Vietnam War. A second cultural shift began when the media drew attention to the '50-year conspiracy of unhealthy silence' heralding the 'start of a reaction against the culture of death denial'. In addition, Australian society underwent broader cultural and intellectual changes with an associated 'greater freedom of emotional expression', and these factors encouraged changes in attitudes toward death.<sup>219</sup>

Despite the secularisation of Australian society during the twentieth century, many basic Christian tenets survived and influenced the attitudes toward death. From the '1950s ... extensive Catholic and Orthodox immigration from southern Europe' reinforced Christian traditions. Furthermore, this migration and Asian immigration

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<sup>217</sup> Acton, *Grief in Wartime: Private Pain, Public Discourse*, pp. 2, 87, 90.

<sup>218</sup> B. Raphael, *The Anatomy of Bereavement: A Handbook for the Caring Professions*, London, UK, Routledge, 1984, pp. 37–56.

<sup>219</sup> Jalland, *Changing Ways of Death in Twentieth-Century Australia: War, Medicine and the Funeral Business*, pp. 188–9, 351.

provided 'diversity in death rituals and behaviour' and engendered 'the view ... open expression of grief could be healing'.<sup>220</sup>

Since the 1980s, against the backdrop of the AIDS epidemic, the euthanasia debate and a general reaction 'against the medicalisation of death', Australians showed renewed interest in attitudes toward death and dying. This process continues as Australians adopt new and modify older practices to meet the diverse and secularised needs of Australian society.<sup>221</sup>

The celebration of ANZAC Day endured for 50 years, despite the activities of various peace movements, some of whom claimed that ANZAC Day glorified war.<sup>222</sup> By the 1960s, attendances at ANZAC Day ceremonies and visits to the Gallipoli Peninsula declined.<sup>223</sup> However, a redefinition of what the Day stood for progressively reversed this slide and ANZAC Day became a day to acknowledge the horrors of war and to remember wartime heroism and selflessness.<sup>224</sup> The federal Government supported the rebirth of ANZAC Day. For example, the RSL organised a pilgrimage to Gallipoli for 71 ANZAC veterans in 1965 and participants paid \$300 each for the privilege, but in 1990, the Government sponsored a pilgrimage to Gallipoli and 58 Gallipoli veterans were included in the entourage. This pilgrimage cost the Government \$10 million. Coincidentally, the revival of ANZAC Day happened at a time when Australia was searching for a new national identity under the leadership of various Prime Ministers.<sup>225</sup>

In Australia, after the First World War and beyond, relatives and returned soldiers frequently called for the repatriation of a representative body to symbolise the absent dead. Their desire was realised on 11 November 1993, with the internment of the remains of an unknown Australian soldier in the Hall of Memory at the Australian

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<sup>220</sup> Ibid., pp. 6, 351.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid., pp. 3, 371.

<sup>222</sup> Donaldson and Lake, 'Whatever happened to the anti-war movement?', pp. 72–9.

<sup>223</sup> J. Macleod, 'The fall and rise of ANZAC day: 1965 and 1990 compared', *War & Society*, Vol. 20, Issue No. 1, 2002, pp. 149–50. Furthermore, the anti-war activists called into question the notions that war was a noble and heroic endeavour and a purifying and regenerative force.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., pp. 155–66. Historians such as Bill Gammage contributed to shaping the new ANZAC narrative by moving the focus onto the original ANZACs, portraying them as the 'tragic heroes'. Donaldson and Lake, 'Whatever happened to the anti-war movement?', p. 90.

<sup>225</sup> Prime Minister Gough Whitlam (1972–75) took the lead in reinvigorating Australia's national identity, as exemplified by his development of foreign policies that were more independent than those of his predecessors, and by his support for the Arts. Macleod, 'The fall and rise of ANZAC day: 1965 and 1990 compared', p. 167.

War Memorial.<sup>226</sup> A surge in *memorialisation* between 1995 and 2005 further reflected increased patriotic interest. During this period, Australians constructed more new war memorials 'than in any other decade since the 1920s'.<sup>227</sup>

In short, the wars of the twentieth century shaped Australian society appreciably and influenced how Australians, collectively and individually mourned their dead.

Australians eagerly embraced participation in the First World War but disillusionment set in as the casualty lists grew. Australia's entry into the Second World War did not carry the fervour of 1914, but support progressively increased, partly because of the threat supposedly posed to Australia by the Japanese.

In the 1950s and 60s, war weariness emerged within the Australian society. The Korean War, the Malayan Emergency and Confrontation with Indonesia went by, virtually unnoticed by most Australians. However, Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War attracted considerable public attention, mainly because of the use of conscripts. Many people viewed the Vietnam War as a dismal failure and sometimes vilified anything or anyone linked to it.

Some Vietnam veterans, returning from an unpopular war felt betrayed by the Government, the RSL and the community at large, mainly because they did not receive a hero's welcome and access to the ANZAC tradition. Some felt society owed them recognition for their service, but it took 14 years or more to provide tangible acknowledgement of such service, with the Welcome Home Parade in 1987 and the dedication of Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial in 1992.

By the 1960s, public recognition of ANZAC Day declined. However, redefinition of what the Day stood for progressively reversed this trend. In the last few decades of the twentieth century, there was a revival of Australians' interest in the place of war and veterans in society, the meaning of wartime sacrifice and in commemorative activities. The Government was at the forefront of this revival.

During the twentieth century, there were two far-reaching changes in the emotional culture around death and grief within Australia. The first, often depicted as a

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<sup>226</sup> Ziino, *A Distant Grief: Australians, War Graves and the Great War*, pp. 158, 160. Nevertheless, Ziino noted Geoffrey Blainey, historian and commentator expressed 'deeper political concerns about the hijacking of sentimentality for Prime Minister Keating's own [republican] ends'. Ziino, *A Distant Grief: Australians, War Graves and the Great War*, p. 161.

<sup>227</sup> Inglis assisted by Brazier, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape*, p. 471.

*denial of death*, occurred between 1914 and the 1970s. The second shift began in the 1970s, engendering responses to death that were more overtly emotional.

The present study adds to our understanding of these shifts in the nature of mourning. Until now, no one has investigated how the post-1970s paradigm influenced the lives of a particular group of Vietnam War families and certain veterans, specifically where individuals necessarily dealt with the loss and non-recovery of their kin or their comrades. To conceptualise this paradigm shift is one thing; to see it played out in the lives of a significant sample of servicemen and their families is another, altogether important and revealing.

## **THEORETICAL CONSTRUCTS AROUND BEREAVEMENT AND GRIEF**

In parallel with this consideration of war-induced mourning, there is a large scholarship around the nature of bereavement and grief more generally. The following considers the theoretical constructs around bereavement, grief and mourning during the twentieth century, including the notion of continuing bonds and the concept of closure. However, before proceeding, the following clarifies some key concepts, with definitions where appropriate.

Psychologists define emotions as 'on-going states of mind marked by mental, bodily or behavioural symptoms'. Emotions possess 'intensionality' or 'object directedness'. Besides their affective component, emotions also have a cognitive element to the extent there is a degree of congruence between a person's thinking and their associated emotions, although this is not always the case. Emotions pertain to a particular point in time, although some emotions, such as grief may initiate 'emotional episodes' to form 'a narrative about a response to an initial cause'.<sup>228</sup>

Moods do not possess intentionality, having 'no object, or at least a very general object'. A degree of reciprocity exists between emotions and moods, where 'moods and emotions may alternate or even co-occur'. Psychologists use the terms *affect* or *affective state* to refer to a range of phenomena, such as emotions, moods and emotional episodes.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> W. Parrott (ed.), *Emotions in Social Psychology*, Philadelphia, PA, Psychology Press, 2001, pp. 3–4, 10–11.

<sup>229</sup> W. Parrott, 'Emotions in social psychology: Volume overview', in W. Parrott (ed.), *Emotions in Social Psychology*, Philadelphia, PA, Psychology Press, 2001, pp. 3–4. Parrott draws on the works of Kenny and Nissenbaum to explain the concepts of *intensionality* and *object* (Continued)

Within the literature, definitions of some concepts vary.<sup>230</sup> In the interests of precision, this study uses the following definitions.

Bereavement is the objective situation of having lost someone significant through death. Significant persons include family members or friends.<sup>231</sup>

Grief is the response to loss through death. Grief primarily manifests as negative affective reactions but may also incorporate psychological and physical elements.<sup>232</sup> This study adopts an inclusive view of grief. Such grief may include 'depressed mood, yearning, loneliness, searching for the deceased, the sense of the deceased being present, and the sense of being in on-going communication' with the decedent.<sup>233</sup> The inclusion of these other states of distress under the rubric of inclusive grief creates a unique affective state. Furthermore, the inclusive view of grief facilitates the study of the component emotions of grief along a continuum, which underpins the stage theories of grief. Theorists generally accept the intensity of grief diminishes over time and individual manifestations subside at differing rates.<sup>234</sup>

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*directedness*. A. Kenny, *Action, Emotion and Will*, London, UK, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963; and, H. F. Nissenbaum, *Emotions and Focus*, Stanford, CA, Center for the Study of Language and Information, 1985.

<sup>230</sup> E. A. Lobb et alia, 'An overview of complicated grief terminology and diagnostic criteria', *Grief Matters*, Vol. 9, Issue No. 2, 2006, pp. 28–9; and, H. G. Prigerson, L. C. Vanderwerker and P. K. Maciejewski, 'A case for inclusion of prolonged grief disorder in DSM-V', in M. S. Stroebe et alia (eds.), *Handbook of Bereavement Research and Practice: Advances in Theory and Intervention (2008)*, 1<sup>st</sup> edn, Washington, DC, American Psychological Association, 2011, pp. 165–7. The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5)* does little to enhance the definitions of bereavement and grief. The Manual introduces the term 'uncomplicated bereavement' to refer to situations where symptoms do not indicate a major depressive episode. American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-5*, 5<sup>th</sup> edn, Arlington, VA, American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 716.

<sup>231</sup> M. S. Stroebe et alia, 'Bereavement research: Contemporary perspectives', in M. S. Stroebe et alia (eds.), *Handbook of Bereavement Research and Practice: Advances in Theory and Intervention (2008)*, pp. 5–6. In some cases, grief may extend to important or well-known individuals, with whom the 'bereaved' did not have personal contact. T. Walter, 'The new public mourning', in M. S. Stroebe et alia (eds.), *Handbook of Bereavement Research and Practice: Advances in Theory and Intervention (2008)*, pp. 241–7.

<sup>232</sup> Stroebe et alia, 'Bereavement research: Contemporary perspectives', p. 5.

<sup>233</sup> K. Goodkin et alia, 'Psychological effects of bereavement and bereavement support group interventions', in M. Stroebe et alia (eds.), *Handbook of Bereavement Research: Consequences, Coping and Care*, Washington, DC American Psychological Association, 2001, p. 672.

<sup>234</sup> R. S. Weiss, 'The nature and causes of grief', in M. S. Stroebe et al. (eds.), *Handbook of Bereavement Research and Practice: Advances in Theory and Intervention (2008)*, pp. 30–3.

Mourning refers to 'the public display of grief [which is] shaped by the (often religious) beliefs and practices of a given society or cultural group'.<sup>235</sup>

Across cultures, marked differences exist in how individuals experience and express grief, noting the culture of a given group may change over time. In addition, within a given culture, societal groups sometimes develop subcultures. Individual narratives are an important component of the grieving process in many societies and the form and content of these narratives vary widely. The on-going existence of the spirits of the dead is accepted across 'most cultures' and the ways in which the living connect with these spirits, and the tone of such interactions, vary considerably.<sup>236</sup>

Grief and mourning may also differ depending on how the person died or who they were. For example, in Western cultures society privileges war deaths over civilian deaths. After the First World War, the Australian public privileged 'grief for brave soldiers ... over individual sorrow for civilians who died domesticated deaths'.<sup>237</sup>

There are various types of grief. *Normal* grief consists in the 'emotional response, falling within *accepted norms*, given the circumstances and implications of

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid., p. 5. In some instances, researchers and authors use the terms 'grief' and 'mourning' interchangeably. Furthermore, scholars sometimes employ different definitions of these basic concepts. For example, Bowlby uses 'mourning' as 'the psychological processes set in train by loss' and uses 'grief' to 'denote the sequence of subjective states that accompany mourning'. J. Bowlby, 'Process of mourning', *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, Vol. 42, 1961, p. 318. Worden adopts similar definitions. J. W. Worden, *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy: A Handbook for the Mental Health Practitioner*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn, New York, NY, Springer Publishing Company, 2002, p. 25.

<sup>236</sup> P. C. Rosenblatt, 'Grief across cultures: A review and research agenda', in M. S. Stroebe et alia (eds.), *Handbook of Bereavement Research and Practice: Advances in Theory and Intervention* (2008), pp. 208, 210–11. For example, in Japan, ancestor worship forms part of the country's cultural heritage dictating how society expresses grief. Extensive rituals supported by Buddhism and well developed theories underpin the tradition of ancestor worship and enable the living to maintain bonds with the dead for three to five decades. The spirits of the dead are readily available for consultation, supporting and encouraging the living, and happily acknowledging their successes. D. Klass, 'Grief in eastern culture: Japanese ancestor worship', in D. Klass, P. R. Silverman and S. L. Nickman (eds.), *Continuing Bonds: New Understandings of Grief*, Washington, DC, Taylor & Francis, 1996, pp. 59–60, 66–7.

<sup>237</sup> Rosenblatt, 'Grief across cultures: A review and research agenda', p. 208; and Jalland, *Changing Ways of Death in Twentieth-Century Australia: War, Medicine and the Funeral Business*, p. 96. Within Australia, this privileging of war dead continues. Certain war veterans receive \$2,000 toward their funeral costs. Department of Veterans' Affairs, 'DVA Factsheet BR04: Bereavement Information', Department of Veterans' Affairs, Canberra, ACT, <<http://factsheets.dva.gov.au/factsheets/documents/BR04%20Bereavement%20Information.htm>>, accessed 29 Jan. 2014. In addition, some veterans are entitled to official commemoration at public expense in the form of a headstone or plaque. Department of Veterans' Affairs, 'Eligibility for Post-war Commemoration', Department of Veterans' Affairs, Canberra, ACT, <[http://www.dva.gov.au/commems\\_oawg/OAWG/post\\_war\\_commemorations/Pages/eligibility.aspx](http://www.dva.gov.au/commems_oawg/OAWG/post_war_commemorations/Pages/eligibility.aspx)>, accessed 29 Jan. 2014. In addition, Government ministers and high-ranking ADF officers often attend the funerals of soldiers killed overseas.

the death' and considering the trajectory and intensity of associated symptoms.<sup>238</sup> Complicated grief deviates from these accepted norms. Various forms of complicated grief such as *chronic/prolonged* grief, and *delayed, inhibited* or *absent* grief have been identified and studied. *Delayed, inhibited* or *absent* grief occur when the bereaved do not initially exhibit symptoms of *normal* grief, but may display such symptoms well after their loss. Because of the complexity of grief and the difficulty in defining the accepted norms, researchers hesitated distinguishing categorically between normal grief and complicated grief.<sup>239</sup>

Ambiguity surrounding a *loss* can give rise to *complicated* grief—grief becomes *frozen*. Boss describes two types of ambiguous loss. First, there is the situation where the *missing person* is 'physically absent but psychologically present' because there is uncertainty as to whether they are dead or alive. Second, the *missing person* is 'physically present but psychologically absent', for instance, where a family member is suffering from a chronic mental disorder. Furthermore, ambiguity complicates the grieving process because the rituals that accompany normal grief are not available.<sup>240</sup>

Although research over the last 60 years examined the myriad ways in which grief manifests, including the 'affective, physical, behavioural and spiritual', the social aspect of grief has received less attention. One such area is disenfranchised grief, which can manifest where 'surrounding others or the society at large' does not accept the bereaved's right to express their grief.<sup>241</sup> This disenfranchisement may be associated with other types of grief.

Bereavement and grief generally manifest in a familial setting. A number of factors affect the family's operation as an on-going system—first, the characteristics of

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<sup>238</sup> Stroebe et alia, 'Bereavement research: Contemporary perspectives', p. 6. Most bereaved in Western societies experience *normal* grief. For example, in the US estimates suggest a figure of 80 to 90% of the bereaved are in this category. Prigerson, Vanderwerker and Maciejewski, 'A case for inclusion of prolonged grief disorder in DSM-V', p. 168.

<sup>239</sup> Stroebe et alia, 'Bereavement research: Contemporary perspectives', pp. 6–7. Nevertheless, the American Psychiatric Association publishes relevant criteria for use by mental health professionals to assist in identifying complicated grief. American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-5*. Any in-depth discussion of the psychological issues associated with grief is outside the scope of this study.

<sup>240</sup> Boss, *Ambiguous Loss: Learning to Live with Unresolved Grief* (1999), pp. 7–11. Boss presents her arguments based on her experience as a family therapist and researcher including interviews in California, Hawaii and Europe with 47 families of MIA personnel.

<sup>241</sup> K. J. Doka, 'Disenfranchised grief in historical and cultural perspective', in M. S. Stroebe, et al. (eds.), *Handbook of Bereavement Research and Practice: Advances in Theory and Intervention* (2008), pp. 224–5.

family members, second, the family's structure and third, its societal positioning.<sup>242</sup> These factors change during the family's life cycle and alter its capacity to function as a 'system'. This view of the family as a dynamic entity is important to understanding how families react to and process grief. Various researchers have examined the intensity of grief occasioned by different types of loss within the family: a child, including adult children; a parent; a spouse; or, a sibling. These studies show a hierarchy of intensity of grieving experiences exists within family units, based on the bereaved's relationship to the decedent.

In the late 1970s, Sanders examined the intensity of grief occasioned by the loss of a child, a parent or a spouse. Sanders concluded parental grief appeared to be more intense and produced the most divergent reactions.<sup>243</sup> Other researchers generally support this position.<sup>244</sup> Sanders noted having a job helped to distract bereaved parents from contemplating their loss: Two mothers 'went to work just to get out of the house'.<sup>245</sup> In addition, with ambiguous loss, the act of 'seeking information' might lessen the 'stress of ambiguity' and lead those left behind feeling "'We have done all that we can'".<sup>246</sup>

Sanders found under normal circumstances, a parent's death induced the lowest level of bereavement intensity, at least in adult children.<sup>247</sup> However, in situations of ambiguous loss, unresolved grief was persistent and intense. Campbell and Demi investigated 'emotional distress, grief and family hardiness' by examining the behaviour and attitudes of 20 adult children whose MIA fathers remained unaccounted-for as of 2000, having gone missing-in-action during the Vietnam War as US service

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<sup>242</sup> C. B. Broderick, *Understanding Family Process: Basics of Family Systems Theory*, Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publications, 1993, pp. 54–8.

<sup>243</sup> C. M. Sanders, 'A comparison of adult bereavement in the death of a spouse, child and parent', *OMEGA: Journal of Death and Dying*, Vol. 10, Issue No. 4, 1980, pp. 315–18. Interviews with 102 recently bereaved individuals in Florida, USA supported the study by Sanders. Sanders based her conclusions regarding parental grief on the responses by 14 parents where the ages of the 'children' ranged from six-and-a-half to 49 years. Sanders did not investigate grief associated with the loss of a sibling.

<sup>244</sup> Conclusions of Gorer and Rosof are similar to those reached by Sanders. G. Gorer, *Death, Grief and Mourning*, London, UK, Cresset Press, 1965; and, B. D. Rosof, *The Worst Loss: How Families Heal from the Death of a Child*, New York, NY, Henry Holt and Company, 1994, pp. 3, 17.

<sup>245</sup> Sanders, 'A comparison of adult bereavement in the death of a spouse, child and parent', p. 317.

<sup>246</sup> Boss, *Ambiguous Loss: Learning to Live with Unresolved Grief* (1999), p. 112.

<sup>247</sup> Sanders, 'A comparison of adult bereavement in the death of a spouse, child and parent', p. 318. Interviews with 36 individuals who had recently lost a parent supported this study by Sanders.



personnel.<sup>248</sup> Campbell's father became MIA in 1969 while piloting a US F4 Phantom over Laos.<sup>249</sup> Unresolved grief persisted 25 years after being notified their fathers were missing.<sup>250</sup>

Sanders suggested the intensity of grief resulting from the death of a spouse was less than that occasioned by the death of a child, but greater than that associated with the loss of a parent. Sanders noted in spousal bereavement, both sexes displayed higher levels of denial than was evident with the loss of a parent or child.<sup>251</sup>

In 2007, working in an Australian context, Clark reported on the reactions of individuals where one of their siblings became a long-term missing person.<sup>252</sup> These missing siblings represented an ambiguous loss that led to unresolved grief. Furthermore, these individuals experienced disenfranchised grief because they felt their parents' loss and grief were more significant. Although feeling confused, powerless and frustrated, participants hoped for a conclusive outcome such as the missing person or their remains being located.<sup>253</sup> Clark noted a lack of knowledge about missing persons in general, and a lack of research specifically into the effect on siblings of having a brother or sister go missing.<sup>254</sup>

In the early twentieth century, psychoanalysis provided the birthplace for modern studies of grief. Progressively scholars from other disciplines such as anthropology and sociology made valuable contributions. The following briefly

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<sup>248</sup> C. L. Campbell and A. S. Demi, 'Adult children of fathers missing-in-action (MIA): An examination of emotional distress, grief, and family hardiness', *Family Relations*, Vol. 49, Issue No. 3, 2000, p. 269. Ten male and 10 female participants aged from 29 to 48 years, from 12 states across the USA supported this study. At the time of their fathers' disappearance, these individuals were aged 'less than one year to 18 years'. Campbell and Demi collected quantitative and qualitative data via telephone interviews and questionnaires.

<sup>249</sup> Although this study used a positivist paradigm, Campbell's experiences as the child of an MIA father influenced the conception and execution of the research. Campbell recorded her 'Personal Thoughts' as a tailpiece to the paper. *Ibid.*, p. 274.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 270. These findings are congruent with observations by Boss. Boss, *Ambiguous Loss: Learning to Live with Unresolved Grief* (1999).

<sup>251</sup> Sanders, 'A comparison of adult bereavement in the death of a spouse, child and parent', p. 318. Sanders based her conclusions regarding spousal bereavement on interviews with 53 recently bereaved individuals.

<sup>252</sup> In-depth interviews with nine participants whose siblings went missing between one and six years previously provided the data for Clark's study. The participants' ages ranged from 24 to 33 years and their siblings were aged between 16 and 25 years at the time of their disappearance. J. Clark, 'Adult siblings of long-term missing people: Loss and "unending not knowing"', *Grief Matters*, Autumn, 2007, p. 16.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6–7, 16–17.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16, 19.

examines the dominant theories about bereavement and grief that emerged during the twentieth century, focusing on the expected behaviours of the bereaved.

In 1872, Darwin had already proposed the notion that grief manifested in *stages*.<sup>255</sup> In 1917, Freud set the scene for purposeful examination of bereavement, at the height of the First World War when the prevailing tendency was to suppress grief.<sup>256</sup> Freud offered a relatively straightforward *stage* theory of grief and advanced the notion the bereaved needed to do *grief work*, by working through their loss, with the aim of detaching emotionally from the deceased.<sup>257</sup> Freud's theories influenced grief research well into the twentieth century.

In 1944, against the backdrop of another world war, Erich Lindeman (1900–1974), a German-American author and psychiatrist continued with the notion that to resolve grief the bereaved needed to relinquish their bonds with the deceased, to 'readjust to their environment' without the deceased and to form 'new relationships'. Impediments to these outcomes arose because many bereaved suppressed the emotions occasioned by their grief.<sup>258</sup>

During the 1950s and 60s, John Bowlby developed his Attachment Theory, examining specifically the attachment between parents and children.<sup>259</sup> In 1961, Bowlby suggested a *three-phase* model to explain the behaviours of the bereaved.<sup>260</sup> In 1980, Bowlby examined spousal bereavement, childhood bereavement and parental bereavement and expanded his model to include four *phases*: numbing; yearning and searching; disorganisation and despair; and re-organisation. The bereaved person's

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<sup>255</sup> C. Darwin, *The Expressions of Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872), with Introduction, Afterword and Commentary by P. Ekman, New York, NY, Philosophical Library, 1998, as cited in R. S. Weiss, 'The nature and causes of grief', p. 33.

<sup>256</sup> S. Freud (ed.), *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917), ed. J. Strachley, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, London, UK, Hogarth Press, 1957, pp. 152–70, as cited in Stroebe et alia, 'Bereavement research: Contemporary perspectives', pp. 8–9.

<sup>257</sup> As many authors are keen to point out, Freud did not apply his theory when his daughter Sophie died in 1920, noting he would 'never find a substitute'. J. W. Rothaupt and K. Becker, 'A literature review of western bereavement theory: From decathecting to continuing bonds', *The Family Journal*, Vol. 15, Issue No. 1, 2007, pp. 6–7; and, P. R. Silverman and D. Klass, 'Introduction: What's the problem?', in D. Klass, P. R. Silverman and S. L. Nickman (eds.), *Continuing Bonds: New Understandings of Grief*, Washington, DC, Taylor & Francis, 1996, p. 6.

<sup>258</sup> E. Lindemann, 'Symptomatology and management of acute grief', *American Journal of Psychiatry*, Vol. 191, 1944, p. 143. Lindeman based his study on interviews with 101 bereaved adults. Some of these persons lost a relative in hospital or during a course of medical treatment. Others lost a family member in a Nightclub fire in Boston in 1942, or during wartime.

<sup>259</sup> J. Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss Vol. 1: Attachment*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Harmondsworth, UK, Penguin, 1969.

<sup>260</sup> Bowlby, 'Process of mourning', pp. 319–20.

goal was to recover from the loss and to affect a re-organisation of their lives.<sup>261</sup> Bowlby noted the bereaved often felt the deceased person's presence and noted such experiences were compatible with a 'favourable outcome'. Nevertheless, Bowlby did not include this notion in his theory, but rather noted such outcomes were sometimes pathological.<sup>262</sup>

Bowlby influenced the British psychiatrist Colin Murray Parkes and they cooperated extensively from 1962 until Bowlby's death in 1992.<sup>263</sup> In 1972, Parkes advanced a *four-phase* theory of grief similar to that offered by Bowlby. Parkes identified phases of numbness, pining, disorganisation and despair followed by recovery. Parkes contended the duration and form of each phase differed between individuals and people can oscillate between phases.<sup>264</sup> Although data gathered by Parkes and his colleagues showed the desire of some widows to maintain their bonds with the deceased, the researchers did not change their theories in response to such evidence.<sup>265</sup>

Discussion about grief theories would not be complete without mentioning the well-known Swiss–American psychiatrist Elizabeth Kübler-Ross. Kübler-Ross studied terminally ill patients in Denver and Chicago during the 1960s. Given her focus on the terminally ill, Kübler-Ross did not deal with *normal* grief, but focused on *anticipatory grief*.<sup>266</sup> Nevertheless, the public progressively came to view Kübler-Ross's stages of grief in a more general context, beyond *anticipatory grief*.<sup>267</sup> Kübler-Ross

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<sup>261</sup> J. Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss Vol. 3: Loss Sadness and Depression*, New York, NY, Basic Books, 1980, pp. 38–43 (conceptual framework), 81–111 (loss of a spouse), 112–25 (loss of a child) and 265–75 (death of a parent).

<sup>262</sup> Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss Vol. 3: Loss Sadness and Depression*, pp. 30, 100.

<sup>263</sup> C. M. Parkes, *Bereavement: Studies of Grief in Adult Life* (1996), 3<sup>rd</sup> edn, Philadelphia, PA, Taylor and Francis, 2001, p. 30.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7, 28–9 (the Bethlem Study) and 20–1, 27–8 (the London Study). Parkes based his findings primarily on his studies involving widows and widowers in the UK between 1958 and 1970. Interviews with 21 recently bereaved psychiatric patients between 1958 and 1960 provided data for the Bethlem Study, with findings published in 1965. Twenty-two young and middle aged widows, aged less than 65, provided data for the London Study in 1970. The aim of these studies was to determine what constituted *normal* or *typical* reactions to bereavement.

<sup>265</sup> Silverman and Klass, 'Introduction: What's the problem?', p. 12.

<sup>266</sup> The unstructured interviews by Kübler-Ross and her associates yielded some interesting cases studies. However, as Kellehear noted in his introduction to the fortieth anniversary edition of Kübler-Ross's well-known book, 'It is essential to note ... *On Death and Dying* is not a work of research. It is a popular book of description, observation and reflection'. R. D. Konigsberg, *The Truth about Grief: The Myth of Its Five Stages and the New Science of Loss*, New York, NY, Simon & Schuster, 2011, p. 94.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102.

conceptualised five stages of dying, Denial and Isolation, Anger, Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance.<sup>268</sup> The dying patient's goal, as espoused by Kübler-Ross was to accept death with dignity. Kübler-Ross lectured worldwide and the 'sympathetic cultural climate and the vital preparatory work of other psychologists' lead to her success.<sup>269</sup>

Shortly before her death, Kübler-Ross co-authored a book with David Kessler.<sup>270</sup> Although the authors acknowledged that the five stages of grief as postulated in 1969 related to the *anticipatory* grief, in 2005 they related the original five stages to *normal* grief. The authors acknowledge the five stages are not necessarily linear and individuals may cycle back and forth between them.<sup>271</sup>

In 1982, building on the work of Lindeman, Parkes, Bowlby and others, J. William Worden, an academic and grief specialist developed a prescriptive four-step *task* model, consistent with the notion of grief work.<sup>272</sup> The first task was to accept the loss; the second was to work through the pain of grief; the third was to adapt to life in the decedent's absence; and, the final task was to withdraw emotionally from the deceased and invest in 'another relationship'.<sup>273</sup> In 1991, Worden altered his model to take into account, albeit to a limited extent, the maintenance of continuing bonds, declaring the bereaved's fourth task was to 'emotionally relocate the deceased and

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<sup>268</sup> E. Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying: What the Dying have to teach Doctors, Nurses, Clergy and their own Families* (1969), New York, NY, Simon & Schuster, 1997, pp. 51–146. There is some suggestion that Kübler-Ross may have appropriated four of her stages from the teachings of A. Beatrice Cobb, a little known American psychologist and educator. It is also suggested Kübler-Ross may have adopted the 'phases of grief' articulated by Parkes during a lecture at the University of Chicago in May 1965. Konigsberg, *The Truth about Grief: The Myth of Its Five Stages and the New Science of Loss*, pp. 96–8. Kübler-Ross has entered popular culture in Australia, her 'stages' even featuring in radio advertisements!

<sup>269</sup> Jalland, *Changing Ways of Death in Twentieth-Century Australia: War, Medicine and the Funeral Business*, pp. 352–4.

<sup>270</sup> E. Kübler-Ross and D. Kessler, *On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss*, New York City, NY, Scribner, 2005.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1–5, 7–28. In 2005, Kübler-Ross and Kessler changed the first stage of the grieving process as postulated in 1969 from 'Denial and Isolation' to 'Denial'.

<sup>272</sup> J. W. Worden, *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy: A Handbook for the Mental Health Practitioner*, 1<sup>st</sup> edn, New York, NY, Springer Publishing Company, 1982. Worden's model relied on the extant literature and on his experience as a grief counsellor and researcher. R. Davies, 'New understandings of parental grief: Literature review', *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, Vol. 46, 2004, p. 509.

<sup>273</sup> Worden, *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy: A Handbook for the Mental Health Practitioner*, pp. 11–16.

move on with life'.<sup>274</sup> Worden acknowledged mourning is often protracted and being able to remember the deceased without the 'wrenching' quality of initial memories indicated the end of grief reactions. Worden progressively refined his ideas about continuing bonds and the latest iteration of the fourth task, in 2009, was to 'find an enduring connection with the deceased in the midst of embarking on a new life'.<sup>275</sup>

The work of Bowlby in particular influenced Australian psychiatrist, Beverley Raphael. In 1984, Raphael described the emotions accompanying loss and noted after the loss is accepted, the bereaved set about 'undoing bonds that built the relationship' with the deceased. She suggests a stage of *recovery* eventually begins, during which the bereaved begin to invest in 'on-going life and relationships'.<sup>276</sup>

In short, at least until the late 1980s, theories around grief generally emphasised the need for the bereaved to sever bonds with the deceased, in the interest of ending the grieving process. Such theories evolved against the backdrop of two world wars when cultural, societal and political factors inhibited the expression of grief. Within Western society, allowing the dead to continue to influence the living was neither desirable nor productive, and potentially represented pathological behaviour; however, in some other cultures, maintaining bonds with the dead is generally acceptable.<sup>277</sup>

Progressively researchers questioned the need for the bereaved to sever connections with the dead. In 1996, Silverman and Klass suggested rather than seeking an end to the grieving process emphasis should be on interpreting the meaning of the loss, and not on relinquishing bonds with the dead. After death, 'a relationship [with the dead] often continues ... through rituals of remembrance and symbols of affection ... not obsessively, but mindfully, in good times and bad'. By maintaining these bonds, the bereaved dynamically develop the deceased person's new social identity.<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>274</sup> J. W. Worden, *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy: A Handbook for the Mental Health Practitioner*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, New York, NY, Springer Publishing Company, 1991, pp. 16–18.

<sup>275</sup> Worden, *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy: A Handbook for the Mental Health Practitioner*, pp. 35–7; and, J. W. Worden, *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy: A Handbook for the Mental Health Practitioner*, 4<sup>th</sup> edn, New York, NY, Springer Publishing Company, 2009, pp. 50–3.

<sup>276</sup> Raphael, *The Anatomy of Bereavement: A Handbook for the Caring Professions*, pp. 33–48.

<sup>277</sup> P. Boss and D. Carnes, 'The myth of closure', *Family Process*, Vol. 51, Issue No. 4, 2012, p. 466.

<sup>278</sup> Silverman and Klass, 'Introduction: What's the problem?', pp. 17–18.

In 2003, Field et alia investigated ongoing attachment of 39 conjugally bereaved persons to their late partners. Continuing bonds persisted well after death; however, in the cases studied, high levels of loss related distress were evident. While acknowledging 'continuing bond[s] may be a part of successful adaptation to bereavement', Field et alia found no evidence to support this notion.<sup>279</sup>

In 2011, Harper et alia, using interpretative phenomenological analysis, reported on how mothers described their coping strategies after the loss of a child. They identified two recurrent themes, the maintenance of bonds with their dead children and their ambivalence to their own mortality.<sup>280</sup>

Hence, since the 1990s researchers have acknowledged the occasional desire of the bereaved to maintain their bonds with the deceased.

Most twentieth-century theories about grief implied, at least with normal grief, that the bereaved could expect to *recover* if they worked through the prescribed grieving process successfully, thereby achieving a state commonly referred to as *closure*. The concept of psychological closure emerged in the 1920s through Bulma Zeigarnik (1901–1988) who studied memories around unfinished tasks.<sup>281</sup> However, it was not until the late 1990s that the term *closure* became commonplace within the general vernacular when discussing grief.<sup>282</sup>

Not all theorists accepted there is an end to the grieving process. In 1996, Silverman and Klass suggested bereavement (grief), as a psychological process never ends and affects mourners differently throughout their lives, and therefore the notion of

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<sup>279</sup> N. P. Field, E. Gal-Oz and G. A. Bonanno, 'Continuing bonds and adjustment at 5 years after the death of a spouse', *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, Vol. 71, Issue No. 1, 2003, pp. 110–11, 115. The 39 participants in the study by Field et alia resided in the San Francisco Bay area. This study spanned a five-year period.

<sup>280</sup> 'Semi-structured interviews ... with 13 bereaved mothers in the UK' provided data for this study. At the time of death, the children were in their infancy, early childhood or adulthood and 'accident, illness and suicide' caused their deaths. M. Harper et alia, 'Mothers continuing bonds and ambivalence to personal mortality after the death of their child—an interpretative phenomenological analysis', *Psychology, Health & Medicine*, Vol. 16, Issue No. 2, 2011, p. 203.

<sup>281</sup> D. R. Beike and E. T. Wirth-Beaumont, 'Psychological closure as a memory phenomenon', *Memory*, Vol. 13, Issue No. 6, 2005, p. 574. The authors point to the work of Zeigarnik who, in the 1920s under the supervision of Lewin showed individuals had better memory recall for uncompleted tasks than for completed ones, thereby showing a lack of 'closure' existed for tasks not completed. K. Lewin, 'Investigations on the psychology of action and affection: The memory of completed and uncompleted actions', *Psychologische Forschung*, Vol. 9, 1927, pp. 1–85.

<sup>282</sup> Berns, *Closure: The Rush to End Grief and What It Costs Us*, p. 19.

closure is not compatible with grief.<sup>283</sup> Silverman and Klass suggest 'accommodation' as an alternative to 'recovery, closure, or resolution', to reflect the inter-active and dynamic activities by which the bereaved understand their loss and ascribe meaning to it.<sup>284</sup>

In 2005, Kübler-Ross and Kessler were emphatic: 'You don't ever bring the grief over [the loss of] a loved one to a close'. They suggest acceptance is 'a process ... not a final stage with an end point' and grief is a 'reflection of a loss that never goes away'.<sup>285</sup> Nevertheless, they also suggest two types of closure. The first is the 'unrealistic wrap-up' immediately after the loss. The second derives from giving perspective to the loss by understanding how and why the person died.<sup>286</sup> Hence, while claiming grief never ends, Kübler-Ross and Kessler imply *closure* is progressive.

In 2011, Brens suggested viewing closure as 'a new emotion for explaining what we need after trauma and loss and how we should respond'. Brens concludes closure is at best 'subjective, elusive and optional' and healing and grief, underpinned by hope do not necessarily require closure.<sup>287</sup> A year later, Boss and Carnes rejected the notion of closure more forcefully, arguing 'closure is a myth', not only with ambiguous loss but also with a 'validated death', because such deaths also contain elements of ambiguity. With ambiguous loss, accepting there is no definitive end to the grieving process, the bereaved can never achieve closure. The only option for them is to 'learn to live with ambiguity and doubt', shifting the goal from closure to a search for meaning.<sup>288</sup> Furthermore, whether using the popularised stage theories of grief or drawing on later research, in the context of ambiguous loss, timeframes suggested for achieving closure are 'unrealistic and culturally biased'. Nonetheless, Western

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<sup>283</sup> The term 'bereavement' as used by Silverman and Klass equates to 'grief', in the context of this study.

<sup>284</sup> Silverman and Klass, 'Introduction: What's the problem?', pp. 18–19. 'Accommodation' is the process of adjusting existing schemas to incorporate new information into one's environment.

<sup>285</sup> Kübler-Ross and Kessler, *On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss*, pp. 27, 158.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 155–6.

<sup>287</sup> Brens, *Closure: The Rush to End Grief and What It Costs Us*, pp. 3, 172.

<sup>288</sup> Boss and Carnes, 'The myth of closure', pp. 464, 456. Other researchers reported their informants categorically rejected the notion of closure around ambiguous loss. Campbell and Demi, 'Adult children of fathers missing-in-action (MIA): An examination of emotional distress, grief, and family hardiness', p. 270; and, Clark, 'Adult siblings of long-term missing people: Loss and "unending not knowing"', pp. 8, 17–18.

societies, with their desire for certainty, generally espouse the notion that closure is possible.<sup>289</sup>

In 2005, Beike and Wirth-Beaumont investigated psychological closure as a memory phenomenon.<sup>290</sup> In part, their study drew on the conceptualisation of the Self Memory System postulated by Conway and Pleydell-Pearce. Within this system, each time an individual recalls a memory it is re-constructed and returned to the autobiographical memory as a revised representation.<sup>291</sup>

Beike and Wirth-Beaumont found the extent of psychological closure attained by individuals, within their 'constructed autobiographical memories' depended not only on individual differences but also on the types of events to which the memories related and the nature of the memory representation. They considered event types in terms of gender, recency and valence, the nature of the event in whether it was traumatic or mundane, and whether the event represented an individual or interpersonal experience.<sup>292</sup>

Significantly, participants considered events open or closed depending on the extent of emotional detail encapsulated in the temporary memory representation of the event. Participants considered emotionally laden memories as 'subjectively more open'.<sup>293</sup> With the passage of time, much of the emotional detail associated with event memories becomes non-accessible and negative emotions appear more susceptible to this effect.<sup>294</sup> Focusing on aspects of the memory that are objective, relevant and well understood reduced the memory representation's emotional content and resulted in increased closure. Hence, closure was more prevalent around memories for older events and participants generally experienced a higher level of closure around

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<sup>289</sup> Boss and Carnes, 'The myth of closure', p. 456.

<sup>290</sup> Beike and Wirth-Beaumont recruited participants from the undergraduate population at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR. The researchers divided their study into four parts, which involved 41, 88, 47 and 92 participants respectively, with 70% being females.

<sup>291</sup> Beike and Wirth-Beaumont, 'Psychological closure as a memory phenomenon', p. 575. By way of explanation, within the Self-Memory System, the 'working self' determines access to autobiographical knowledge and the subsequent construction of memories based on such information. Furthermore, knowledge that is 'strikingly discrepant with the [individual's] current goal structure' may be 'edited, distorted or changed in some other way'. M. A. Conway and C. W. Pleydell-Pearce, 'The construction of autobiographical memories in the self-memory system', *Psychological Review*, Vol. 107, Issue No. 2, 2000, p. 272.

<sup>292</sup> Beike and Wirth-Beaumont did not produce definitive results regarding closure associated with interpersonal/individual events.

<sup>293</sup> Beike and Wirth-Beaumont, 'Psychological closure as a memory phenomenon', p. 589.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 575.



memories related to pleasant events. Finally, not surprisingly, Beike and Wirth-Beaumont noted frequent recall of an event decreased its level of closure.<sup>295</sup>

These findings suggest that within the grieving process, the degree of closure might increase with the passage of time, although frequent recall of associated negatively valenced memories could be counter-productive. Ascribing meaning to the loss, for example seeing death during war service as a heroic sacrifice, might change the recollected event's valence and thereby encourage closure.

Empiricism underpinned much of the twentieth century research into bereavement and grief, for which theorists generally employed a positivist paradigm. Researchers often dismissed the bereaved's subjective experiences and the importance of their relationships, because these issues were difficult to study within the positivist model.<sup>296</sup> However, since the 1980s some researchers moved away from this positivist approach and focused on the reported experiences of people themselves, and how they construct meaning within their multiple social realities.<sup>297</sup>

In summary, scholars now generally agree that grief is an individual experience, influenced by many factors including the prevailing culture and societal norms, the bereaved person's gender, their position in their family, their religion and their ante-mortem relationship with the decedent. Normal grief is the usual manifestation but various forms of complicated grief such as *chronic/prolonged* grief, *delayed*, *inhibited* or *absent* grief and *disenfranchised* grief sometimes emerge.

Early twentieth-century theories concerning bereavement and grief within Western societies suggested effective resolution of grief required severing bonds with the deceased, to enable the formation of new relationships. However, since the 1990s, in response to the changing cultural climate, new research suggested severing bonds with the dead might not be necessary or desirable, although there is some evidence that intense preoccupation with such bonds could be maladaptive.

Some researchers suggest grief never ends, thereby implying closure, is unattainable, particularly where ambiguous loss is involved. Although theorists hold divided opinions on *closure* as it might relate to grief, closure does exist as a memory phenomenon, which suggests the extent of closure varies with time. The absence of an

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<sup>295</sup> Ibid., p. 589.

<sup>296</sup> Silverman and Klass, 'Introduction: What's the problem?', pp. 14–15, 20–1.

<sup>297</sup> Davies, 'New understandings of parental grief: Literature review', p. 511.

accepted cross-discipline definition of closure contributes to the complexity of the debate regarding what constitutes closure, and indeed whether *closure* is a legitimate concept in the context of grief studies.

Empiricism underpinned much of the research into bereavement and grief and theorists generally employed a positivist paradigm. Overall, a tidy package evolved whereby the bereaved were supposed to work through their loss, acknowledge the reality of death and get on with their lives. Some theorists questioned the validity of such a tidy package, suggesting research focusing on how individuals experience grief within their multiple realities might be a more useful approach.

One may reasonably ask, how well do these extant theoretical constructs explain the behaviours of individual Australians who lost relatives or comrades during wartime?

### **THE ISSUES OF CONCERN AND THE PROPOSED STUDY**

This review highlights two issues of concern related to Australia's wartime losses during the second half of the twentieth century.

First, the efficacy of Australia's efforts to manage matters associated with MIA personnel since the 1950s appears wanting. It appears Australia was able to sweep the remains of the missing under some metaphorical carpet. Blight on Australia's national identity was evident: Australia lost her spirit. This apparent lack of interest in the recovery of the missing during the second half of the twentieth century reveals a cultural undercurrent of amnesia around Australia's missing war dead. This undercurrent survived during the last two decades of the twentieth century despite the patriotic resurgence of interest in commemorating Australians' wartime sacrifices. Searching for the missing, beyond initial battlefield clearance, was a priority of neither the Australian Government nor the Australian Defence Force, and this underlying philosophy was formalised in ADF policy in 1996. The situation around the Korean War MIAs and the six MIAs from Vietnam clearly reflects this dilemma.

Second, the historical literature contains a wealth of descriptive detail regarding the experiences of those who lost relatives or comrades during wartime, but such accounts relate mainly to the First and the Second World Wars, with less attention being paid to the more recent conflicts in which Australia took part—the Korean War, Confrontation with Indonesia and the Vietnam War. Many of the related clinical studies deal with bereavement and grief in the wider community and focus on normal grief and on specific relationships. Although there are some contemporary studies that deal with missing Australians in general, minimal research exists regarding the grieving

experiences of Australians associated with service persons declared MIA, particularly during the second half of the twentieth century. Our understandings in this area are inadequate.

The opportunity exists to investigate these two issues of concern by studying the cases of six Australian men left behind during the Vietnam War: the Forgotten Six. These cases represent the most recent cohort of Australians declared MIA and provide a fecund field of investigation, for of a number of reasons. First, an examination of these cases has the potential to illuminate the reasons for the Australian Governments' inertia regarding recovery of wartime missing during the second half of the twentieth century. Second, some members of the families of the Forgotten Six and some of their comrades are available to support this study and therefore the possibility exists to gain a first hand understanding of how they dealt with the men's loss and initial non-recovery, and their eventual recovery, after 36 years or more. We have a chance to breathe the air of experience. Furthermore, my personal involvement in the recovery of the Forgotten Six facilitates ready access to many of the members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades. In addition, numerous other primary and secondary sources exist to support this study.<sup>298</sup> Third, because all six cases have been resolved they provide an opportunity to study the full cycle of the grieving process in a relatively contemporary setting, and to assess the import of recovering the missing. Hence, this research considers the issues of concern by reference to the Forgotten Six.

The primary aim of the research is to give voice to the members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades by examining the multiple realities they faced as they dealt with the ambiguity and various emotions around the loss and non-recovery of the six men, and their eventual recovery. A subsidiary aim of this study is to examine why it took 36 years or more to recover the six men.

Two issues provide the motivation for this study. First, the primary motivation is to develop a first hand account of the difficulties faced by veterans and their loved ones in dealing with the complexities of wartime experiences and, in particular the loss, recovery and repatriation of MIAs, in a relatively contemporaneous setting. Second, the

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<sup>298</sup> For example, records regarding the loss incidents involving the six men are quite comprehensive, due to the rapid exchange of information by virtue of the improved radio communications during the Vietnam War. Custodians of these records have catalogued and stored much of the material, some digitally. Furthermore, contemporary internet technologies facilitate retrieval of records and the tracking down of witnesses, thereby facilitating in-depth investigation of these cases.

desire to avoid a re-occurrence of events similar to those related to the MIA cases from Vietnam drives this study.

Considering the Australian authorities' record in managing historical recoveries, a review of the management of MIA matters in general might be appropriate at this time. Lack of understanding of the impact of having a relative or comrade declared MIA has the potential to detract from the development of capable policies and management practices. Therefore, this study will inform policy makers and practitioners as to the likely expectations, behaviours and/or attitudes of persons who endure experiences similar to those encountered by the members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades, now or in the future. Understanding such issues might enable the responsible authorities to attend to the needs of those affected in a more appropriate way. Such a capability is particularly relevant considering there are 42 Australian MIA cases from the Korean War that may warrant attention, as well as a declining number of cases from the Second World War where living relatives and comrades still contemplate the fate of the missing.

In short, a clear need exists for the proposed study because the issues of concern have not enjoyed in-depth examination and open debate. This research will contribute to the wider discourse regarding the issues of concern, to illuminate some of the current attitudes of Australians to these issues, and to engender a more progressive attitude around the handling of MIA matters.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The grief arising from wartime losses affects society for many years after hostilities end. We see symbols of grief and mourning around the former battlefields and across Australia, in the cities and hometowns of those who died serving the nation. The hearts of the men and women who lost loved ones or comrades were terribly scarred, especially when no mortal remains were recoverable. Across the nation, citizens have an obligation to these fellow Australians, to understand their grief and to lend support where they can—and the nation has a moral obligation to the missing themselves, to recover and properly commemorate them. The present study acknowledges and embraces these two obligations.

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN

### ***WHAT IS RESEARCH DESIGN?***

Having identified the issues of concern and offered justification for the current study, this chapter describes the research design anticipated in the penultimate section of the previous chapter.

The literature on research design falls into a number of categories. First, there is a wealth of general literature on the design and conduct of this type of research.<sup>1</sup> Second, the literature outlines the various general issues that the researcher needs to consider, including epistemologies, theoretical perspectives, methodologies and methods. A third block of literature deals with specific issues such as ethics, carrying out a literature review and useful writing styles. Because only selected texts support this design, a review of design-related literature as a whole is not necessary; rather, the design articulated here draws on and discusses specific literature where relevant.

There is considerable debate about the topics a research design should embrace.<sup>2</sup> For example, topics might include ontological, epistemological, axiological, rhetorical and methodological issues.<sup>3</sup> However, I will specifically present the design in terms of six basic elements of a research enterprise—epistemology, theoretical perspective, axiology, ethical considerations, methodology and methods.<sup>4</sup> The development of an appropriate writing style will also be discussed.

The following approach guides this design. First, a review of the issues of concern leads to articulation of the research question, which clarifies the study's foci. Second, examination of the research question enables explication of the conceptual framework that informs the study overall. Third, further consideration of the research question and the conceptual framework leads to the identification of the conceptual and methodological issues required to progress the study.

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<sup>1</sup> The seminal work by Michael Crotty (1931–1998), a moral theologian and educator who worked at Flinders University, SA is particularly informative and this study's design draws on Crotty's work extensively.

<sup>2</sup> J. W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publications, 2007, p. 41.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> M. Crotty, *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process* (1998), St Leonards, NSW, Allen & Unwin, 2012, pp. 2–3.

## **FROM THE RESEARCH QUESTION TO THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

This study gives voice to family members and comrades of the Forgotten Six and aims to illuminate the behaviours and/or attitudes of these individuals as they dealt with the loss, non-recovery and eventual recovery of the six men. Furthermore, this research explains why there was a delay of 36 years or more in recovering the men. I hope this study will inform policy makers and others of the likely expectations, behaviours and/or attitudes of persons who endure similar experiences and enable relevant parties to attend to the needs of family members and others in a more appropriate way.<sup>5</sup> The latter is particularly important given the number of unresolved MIA cases from the Second World War and the Korean War.

The research question has three parts. First, what were the experiences, key behaviours and/or attitudes of the members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades around the men's loss and non-recovery? Second, what role did the Government, the ADF and OAH play in recovering the men, and why did it take 36 years or more to bring them home? Third, after the searchers discovered the men's remains how were family members and comrades of the men affected in terms of experiences, behaviours and/or attitudes?

The conceptual framework identifies the main issues germane to the study and suggests relationships between them. The framework derives from ideational elements, as articulated in the literature, from my experience and from the research question itself.<sup>6</sup> In a practical sense, the framework helps identify subjects and organisations for study; and suggests the type of data required and methods for its collection and analysis.

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<sup>5</sup> C. Hart, *Doing a Literature Review: Releasing the Social Science Research Imagination*, Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publications, 1998, pp. 46–7; and, Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, p. 107.

<sup>6</sup> M. B. Miles and A. M. Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publications, 1994, p. 18; and, J. D. Novak and R. Gowin, *Learning How to Learn*, New York, NY, Cambridge University Press, 1984, pp. 166–7. As often happens with many methodological terms, the term 'conceptual framework' carries a variety of meanings. Some methodologists extend the meaning of the term beyond design related issues to include matters such as 'literature' and 'theory'. S. M. Ravitch and M. Riggan, *Reason & Rigor: How Conceptual Frameworks Guide Research*, Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publications, 2012, p. 6. This study considered these wider issues in the preceding chapter.

Topical sub-questions, derived from the research question, informed the conceptual framework.<sup>7</sup> Because of the exploratory and explanatory nature of this study, the conceptual framework embraces relevant issues in terms of causal conditions, prevailing contexts, the studied phenomenon, intervening conditions, actions/interactions and outcomes. The following questions reflect these issues. First, how were the six men lost and why did their comrades and/or the authorities fail to recover them or their remains during the War, and in the years up to 2007? Second, who were the specific individuals from among the family members and comrades most affected by the men's loss and eventual recovery? What were their life situations? Third, what were the particular psychological issues faced by these people? Fourth, what external factors—cultural, societal and political—influenced the actions of family members, comrades and others, and how did these factors change over time? What was the role of the Australian Government and its agencies in recovering the six men? What role did OAH play in the men's recovery? Fifth, what actions did family members and comrades take to manage the issues associated with the men's loss, and how did they manage their on-going daily lives while dealing with such matters? What interactions took place between family members, comrades and other agencies such as the Government, the ADF and OAH? Sixth, what were the practical, cognitive and psychological outcomes of the actions and interactions undertaken by the family members and comrades?

The conceptual framework assists in delimiting the research. The temporal boundaries lie between the time of the men's loss (1965–71) and 2011, after the repatriation of the remains of all six men, and the finalisation of associated commemorative activities.<sup>8</sup>

The families of the Forgotten Six lie at the heart of this research, along with a selection of the men's comrades. 'Family' in this instance is defined as a social unit based on 'interdependent relationships, by virtue of ... connections through blood,

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<sup>7</sup> Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, pp. 109–12. Creswell refers to topical sub-questions as procedural sub-questions because they assist thinking regarding the procedural steps that may be relevant in the research process.

<sup>8</sup> This time span (1965–2011) logically divides into two periods. The first lasted from when the men were lost to 2001 and the second ran from 2002 to 2011. During the second period, OAH's activities fostered a new paradigm within which the family members and comrades of the Forgotten Six dealt with the possibility of recovering the men's remains.

marriage, domestic circumstances or affection'.<sup>9</sup> The stories embedded in this study centre on three types of families including the decedents' birth families; the birth families of the widows of three of the men; and, the conjugal families formed by these three men and their widows, including their children. The three widows created additional families on re-marriage and these families are included, because they are integral to the widows' narratives.<sup>10</sup>

Initial research identified 49 potential subjects within these families. However, not all were alive or their circumstances known. Three criteria provided the rationale for inclusion of family members as subjects. First, the primary factor was the nature of the ante-mortem relationship with the missing or deceased person. Those with significant relationships were preferred. Second, where a potential subject was dead, the elapsed time between their relative's loss and the candidate's death was important. Third, the availability of data regarding the potential subject necessarily influenced selection. As a result, 19 family members were selected as subjects, 10 of whom were female.

Five similar criteria informed the selection of comrades for inclusion as subjects. First and most important was the extent of involvement in the loss incident. Second, the type and duration of the ante-mortem relationship with the decedent influenced selection. Some periods of interaction were relatively short but comrades bonded because of intense shared experiences, which sometimes involved close encounters with the opposing force and the possibility of death. Third, the availability of relevant data was critical. Fourth, meaningful interaction between a candidate and a member of an MIA family argued for inclusion as a subject. Fifth, where a potential subject was dead, the elapsed time between the relevant loss incident the candidate's death influenced selection. This process identified 18 comrades as subjects, not including one veteran who was also a relative. Of these 18 comrades, 17 were male and served in Vietnam while one was female, an entertainer who toured Vietnam on two occasions.

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<sup>9</sup> M. Larsson, *Shattered ANZACs: Living with the Scars of War*, Sydney, NSW, University of New South Wales Press, 2009, p. 20. Servicepersons sometimes refer to the 'military family'; however, such a grouping is not included in the concept of 'family' in the context of this study.

<sup>10</sup> One of these 'additional' families was a 35-year de-facto relationship and another ended in divorce after approximately 17 years. The two children of Gillson and Gillespie married or lived in marriage like situations, with different partners and six children resulted from these unions. The families of the children of Gillson and Gillespie are not included in this study.



Hence, 37 individuals emerged as subjects.<sup>11</sup>

In the final analysis, 'our knowledge claims can *be* no better or worse' than the tools we use to gather data. If these tools are faulty and the data assembled is deficient, 'no degree of elegant transformation' will enable the production of valid knowledge claims.<sup>12</sup>

Most data used in this study derive from humans, those frail repositories of memory. Within their concomitant cultural and societal environments, individuals interpreted their lived experiences on occurrence, re-interpreted them over the years, discussed them with the researcher (and others), who in turn made meaning of what was said. In designing this study, this tenuous link between lived events, the stories related by participants and research outcomes received considerable attention, in an effort to achieve coherence. Nevertheless, I acknowledge that the stories recorded herein are not necessarily descriptions of original experiences, but are effectively *my interpretations* of the *subjects' interpretations* of such experiences.<sup>13</sup>

## **CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES**

The conceptual issues considered in the current study's design are epistemology, embracing ontology, theoretical perspective, axiology and ethics. Ontology considers 'the nature of reality and its characteristics'. During discussions of research design, ontology sometimes appears among the four basic elements, ahead of epistemology.<sup>14</sup> Ontology therefore theoretically guides epistemology; however, ontological and epistemological issues tend to merge.<sup>15</sup> This study accepts that proposition and therefore does not examine ontology separately.

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<sup>11</sup> Appendix A contains the prosopographies of selected members of the families of the Forgotten Six and a number of their comrades. Appendix C provides snapshots of the families at critical times, such as at the time of the loss incidents and in 2002, when OAH entered the field.

<sup>12</sup> Novak and Gowin, *Learning How to Learn*, p. 166.

<sup>13</sup> C. Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, New York, NY, Basic Books, 1973, p. 9.

<sup>14</sup> Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, pp. 16–17; and, M. Henn, M. Weinstien and N. Foard, *A Short Introduction to Social Research*, Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publications, 2006, pp. 17–18.

<sup>15</sup> Crotty, *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process* (1998), p. 10.

Methodology is 'the strategy, plan of action, process or design' supporting the selection and implementation of specific methods. Methodology thereby links the choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes.<sup>16</sup>

In the interests of ensuring validity, there needs to be consistency between the epistemological approach and the theoretical perspective.<sup>17</sup> The practical methods of data collection, records transformation and analysis must also demonstrate consistency with each other.<sup>18</sup> The research question and the conceptual framework, underpinned by research events and objects sit between the conceptual issues and methodological issues and drive the research process, thereby contributing to the coherence of the study's design and execution. Furthermore, throughout the research process, conceptual and the methodological issues interact, continually informing one another.<sup>19</sup> Acknowledgement of this continual interplay further enhances the study's coherence.

## **EPISTEMOLOGY**

Epistemology deals with the nature and possible scope of knowledge, its presuppositions and its foundations.<sup>20</sup> Hence, epistemology underpins the theoretical perspective and the research methodology.<sup>21</sup>

This study relies on a constructivist epistemology. 'Constructivism describes the individual human subject engaging with objects in the world and making sense of them'.<sup>22</sup> Initially, when we first acquire communication skills, each of us encounters a world of meaning that derives predominantly from concomitant cultures and

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, p. 42.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>19</sup> Novak and Gowin, *Learning How to Learn*, pp. 5–6; and, Crotty, *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process* (1998), pp. 6–17.

<sup>20</sup> D. W. Hamlyn, 'The history of epistemology', in T. Honderich (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, Oxford, UK, Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 242, as cited in Crotty, *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process* (1998), p. 8.

<sup>21</sup> Crotty, *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process* (1998), p. 3.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 79.

subcultures.<sup>23</sup> These meanings 'establish a tight grip upon us and, by and large shape our thinking and behaviour throughout our lives'.<sup>24</sup>

Along with critical theorists and participatory/cooperative inquirers, constructivists are primarily interested in 'subjective and inter-subjective social knowledge' and the 'active construction and co-creation of such knowledge'.<sup>25</sup> Constructivism requires that the researcher does 'not remain straitjacketed by the conventional meanings that we have been taught to associate with the object'. Rather, constructivist research 'invites us to approach the object in a radical spirit of openness'.<sup>26</sup>

## **THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE**

The theoretical perspective consists in 'the philosophical stance informing the methodology' and provides context to ground the methodology's logic and criteria.<sup>27</sup> In the main, an interpretive perspective—specifically symbolic interactionism—informs this study. In addition, a critical perspective underpins one part of the research question, the examination of the Government and the ADF's role in recovering the Forgotten Six. Both of these perspectives are compatible with a constructivist epistemology.

Peirce, James, Dewey and Mead provided the inspiration for the American philosophy of pragmatism, with Peirce initiating the concept.<sup>28</sup> Peirce's pragmatism contained an element of criticality.<sup>29</sup> James popularised pragmatism, nullifying Peirce's criticality, and the philosophy's thrust became increasingly more difficult to define.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>25</sup> E. G. Guba and Y. S. Lincoln, 'Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions and emerging confluences', in N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn, Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publications, 2005, p. 203.

<sup>26</sup> Crotty, *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process* (1998), p. 51.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>28</sup> R. Prus, *Symbolic Interaction and Ethnographic Research: Intersubjectivity and the Study of Human Lived Experience*, Albany, NY, State University of New York Press, 1996, p. 46. Although some scholars deem pragmatism to be an 'American' philosophy, James, Dewey and Mead studied in Germany early in their careers and were exposed to the various philosophies and social science issues being considered by German scholars at the time. Prus, *Symbolic Interaction and Ethnographic Research: Intersubjectivity and the Study of Human Lived Experience*, p. 47.

<sup>29</sup> Crotty, *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process* (1998), p. 73.

However, in general pragmatists focus on how individuals accomplish things at a practical level, emphasising 'the socially constructed ... nature of human group life' and 'the social processes' that shape the community. Pragmatists view people 'as reflective beings who ... [possess] capacities to act meaningfully of their own situations and in conjunction with others'. Furthermore, pragmatism suggests a 'practical utility approach to knowledge' and that such an approach 'would provide the most viable approximations of the truth'.<sup>30</sup> Hence, pragmatism offered a new perspective on the interaction between individuals within the social world.

Pragmatism established the socio-philosophical foundation that led to the development of a fresh theoretical perspective, symbolic interactionism.<sup>31</sup> Many of the pragmatists' insights, especially those of Dewey, Mead and Charles Cooley (1864–1929, a student of Dewey's) provided the basis for this new perspective. Mead and Cooley initially made 'the most direct and sustained contribution' in the development of the perspective, though Herbert Blumer (1900–1987) coined the term 'Symbolic Interactionism' in 1937.<sup>32</sup>

Mead taught for almost 40 years, mainly at the University of Chicago, but published little.<sup>33</sup> However, a number of Mead's students, primarily using notes from his classes, published three books detailing Mead's work, the most important being *Mind, Self and Society*.<sup>34</sup>

Mead makes a number of points regarding symbolic interaction. First, he asserts 'reality is a symbolic experience'. The development of shared sets of symbols, which include language, enables the construction and transmission of realities, as humans interact. Second, from Mead's viewpoint, '[the human] mind is not simply a passive receptacle [but] ... involves an active sense of participation in the community of others'. Third, Mead uses the term 'I' to indicate this 'initiative capacity of humans for action'. He uses 'me' to refer to the 'meaningful self ... [that] is predicated on the

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<sup>30</sup> Prus, *Symbolic Interaction and Ethnographic Research: Intersubjectivity and the Study of Human Lived Experience*, p. 47.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 48; and, Crotty, *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process* (1998), p. 74.

<sup>32</sup> Prus, *Symbolic Interaction and Ethnographic Research: Intersubjectivity and the Study of Human Lived Experience*, p. 48.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., pp. 72, 52.

<sup>34</sup> G. H. Mead, *Mind, Self and Society*, Edited by Charles W. Morris, Chicago, IL, Chicago University Press, 1934. Blumer was one of Mead's students who contributed appreciably in disseminating Mead's work.

recognition of oneself as an object ... in a world of other (symbolic) objects'. He perceives individuals interacting with themselves to process meaning and through such interaction the self is developed.<sup>35</sup>

Blumer's doctoral dissertation ('Methodology in Social Psychology') completed at the University of Chicago in 1928, signalled his eventual role as a champion of the interpretative tradition. He studied the works of Mead and Cooley and developed his notions of symbolic interactionism, and argued against the prevailing positivist (quantitative) traditions within the social sciences.<sup>36</sup> Blumer indicates symbolic interactionism relies on three key premises. First, 'human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings [those] things have for them'. Second, 'the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows'. Third, 'these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters'.<sup>37</sup>

Blumer became the leading advocate for the 'Chicago School of Sociology', which was based on the University of Chicago's Department of Sociology. From the 1920s to the 1950s, the *School* built up a significant reputation for conducting qualitative research and ethnographic fieldwork. The urban sociologist, Robert Park, who taught at the University of Chicago from 1914 to 1933, was a strong advocate of such 'first-hand' research. Progressively, symbolic interactionism became a defining feature of the Chicago School.<sup>38</sup>

The notions underpinning symbolic interactionism are directly implicated in the telling of the stories around the Forgotten Six. First, they provide an understanding of how the participants and the researcher ascribe meanings to lived experiences; and second, they assist in understanding how the participants and the researcher might construct meaning during research events, particularly during interviews. These meanings are at the core of the participants' stories since, '[o]nly through dialogue can one become aware of the perceptions, feelings and attitudes of others and interpret

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<sup>35</sup> Prus, *Symbolic Interaction and Ethnographic Research: Intersubjectivity and the Study of Human Lived Experience*, pp. 53–5.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 68–74.

<sup>37</sup> H. Blumer, *Symbolic Interactionism Perspective and Method*, Berkeley, CA, University of California Press, 1969, p. 2, as cited in Prus, *Symbolic Interaction and Ethnographic Research: Intersubjectivity and the Study of Human Lived Experience*, pp. 67–8.

<sup>38</sup> K. Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publications, 2014, p. 264.

their meanings and intent'.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, 'symbolic interactionism directs the investigator to take, to the best of his ability, the standpoint of those studied'.<sup>40</sup>

In part, the critical perspective adopted in this study supports a critique of the management of MIA matters during the second half of the twentieth century through to 2010. Part of the study's intent is to understand the reasons for certain actions and events, from the Government and the ADF's point of view, particularly the delay in recovering the Forgotten Six, and thereby make recommendations for change to redress the perceived 'hegemony and injustice' of the State.<sup>41</sup> To satisfy this purpose, this study rests on a number of basic assumptions adopted from the contemporary version of critical theory/inquiry.<sup>42</sup> First, power relations, which are essentially social in nature, influence all thought. Second, facts are inseparable from values and ideology. Third, some societal groups are not as privileged as others and this leads to levels of oppression in which the less privileged 'accept their status as natural, necessary or inevitable', and oppression gains force. Fourth, 'mainstream research practices' often contribute to sustaining conditions to support oppression.<sup>43</sup> These factors enabled the State's construction and maintenance of its hegemonic stance.

Critical theory and constructivism are similar because 'research results are created through consensus and individual constructions, including constructions of the

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<sup>39</sup> Crotty, *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process* (1998), pp. 75–6.

<sup>40</sup> N. K. Denzin, 'The methodological implications of symbolic interactionism for the study of deviance', in A. Wells (ed.), *Contemporary Social Theories*, Santa Monica, CA, Goodyear, 1978, p. 99, as cited in Crotty, *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process* (1998), p. 75.

<sup>41</sup> Crotty, *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process* (1998), pp. 113, 157.

<sup>42</sup> Marx laid the foundation for critical inquiry. Engels and Weber contributed to the debate following Marx's death. The Institute for Social Research, formed in 1924 encouraged further scholarly debate. The Frankfurt School, which originated from within the Institute for Social Research in the 1950s, embraced critical theory whole-heartedly, but interpretations varied. Ibid., pp. 115, 122–30.

<sup>43</sup> J. L. Kincheloe and P. L. McLaren, 'Rethinking critical theory and qualitative research', in N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 1<sup>st</sup> edn, Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications, 1994, pp. 139–40, as cited in Crotty, *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process* (1998), pp. 157–8.

investigator'.<sup>44</sup> Hence, the perspective of critical inquiry is compatible with a constructivist epistemology.<sup>45</sup>

## **MY AXIOLOGICAL POSITION**

Research is, by its very nature value-laden. The issues studied, related theories and the research paradigms often imply values. Particularly with qualitative research, the researcher's value systems influence the conduct of the research and researchers need to make such values explicit, and thereby identify and acknowledge biases.<sup>46</sup>

In the stories around the Forgotten Six, the values of the subjects and participants and my values derived from our lived experience and associated interactions. Basic demographics such as gender, ethnicity, religious beliefs, and cultural and societal norms also influenced such values. These values are a necessary and inevitable part of the broader story.

I was born in 1943 in Ayr, Queensland. I grew up in a Christian environment but today I am an agnostic. After graduating from the Army's Officer Cadet School in 1964, I undertook two tours of Vietnam.<sup>47</sup> Despite serving for 23 years in the Army and retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel, I never accepted authority very well. As a general philosophy, I subscribe whole-heartedly to the timeworn Australian adage that *everybody deserves a fair go*, which underpins the critical perspective adopted herein toward the State and its instrumentalities.

In 2002, I began investigating the cases of the six Australians who were unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War and in 2005, established an incorporated

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<sup>44</sup> K. E. Howell, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Methodology*, Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publications, 2013, p. 88.

<sup>45</sup> K. Charmaz, 'Grounded theory in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Applications for advancing social justice studies', in N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn, Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publications, 2005, pp. 512–14. In 2005, Charmaz posited that to provide a grounded theory methodology for the twenty-first century, specifically one that advances research in the substantive area of social justice 'we must build upon its constructionist elements rather than objectivist leanings'. The Chicago School philosophy of pragmatism is the basis for her vision. Charmaz, 'Grounded theory in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Applications for advancing social justice studies', pp. 507–9.

<sup>46</sup> Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, p. 18.

<sup>47</sup> During my first tour, I served as a platoon commander with 1 RAR from mid-1965 to early 1966 and was on the same operation when the first two of the Forgotten Six were lost in Nov. 1965. Because I received a gunshot wound to the face in Jan. 1966, I returned to Australia for treatment. On my second tour, I served with AATTV and the 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Logistic Support Group during 1968 and 1969. During my service life I experienced death in various forms, but probably because of the culture of death denial that persisted before the 1980s, my grief was always internalised.

association, OAH Inc. to further these investigations. For seven years (2002–09), I worked closely with several members of five of the families of the Forgotten Six, to investigate their cases and to lobby the Government on their behalf. OAH discovered the remains of the first two of the six men in 2007. My involvement in the investigation of the cases of the Forgotten Six, their eventual recovery and my participation in the repatriation of five of them out of Hanoi and attendance at the funerals of all six puts me in a privileged position.<sup>48</sup> I definitely see myself as an *insider*. Hence, the understandings of the experiences of members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades arrived at through this research are constructed through my interaction with them and others, mediated by the values we bring to the research. No doubt exists in my mind regarding the influence of my values and personal perspectives on this study; however, I endeavoured to be as *reasonable* and as *unbiased* as possible.

## **ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Because I worked closely with several members of five of the families of the Forgotten Six for seven years, I believe I have their trust and I would not wish any harm to any of them. This study adopts a deontological approach to matters ethical.<sup>49</sup> Ethical considerations may be conceptual in nature but they interact with many of the practical issues associated with research design and execution, through to and including research outcomes.

The guidelines provided by Victoria University's Human Research Ethics Committee guided this research.<sup>50</sup> Because of my close association with some of the potential participants, my Principal Supervisor invited likely candidates to take part in the study.<sup>51</sup> In general, participants supported the project, understanding that the work

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<sup>48</sup> In 1958, convention dictated that I, as a teenager should not attend my father's funeral. I consequently empathised with the families of the Forgotten Six, because they were not able to conduct funerals for their relatives for 36 years or more.

<sup>49</sup> The deontological approach to ethics calls upon 'one or more universal rules' such as Kant's 'categorical and practical imperatives'. Miles and Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis*, pp. 289–90. Kant suggested ethics derive from thought processes and one should act so that the general principles underlying one's actions can become a 'general law', which *all* should obey. Howell, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Methodology*, p. 12.

<sup>50</sup> In accordance with Victoria University's policy regarding research data and materials, the audio of interviews and associated transcripts are stored electronically on a secure facility controlled by the University. Victoria University holds the copies of participant's consent forms and their completed questionnaires.

<sup>51</sup> This process allowed potential participants to feel less pressured to take part than if I had directly issued an invitation to them. A description of the proposed study accompanied each invitation to assist potential participants in making an 'informed decision' to participate.



might benefit other MIA families. Nonetheless, five individuals declined the invitation to participate. Three of these contacted me directly, of their own volition, to advise their reasons for not taking part.<sup>52</sup> In addition, two participants requested anonymity and were assigned pseudonyms to protect their identities, at least in part.<sup>53</sup>

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study uses the methodology of grounded theory, which emerged in the 1960s through the work of Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss. Grounded theory has since been used in a large number of forums and research endeavours.<sup>54</sup> The following offers a brief review of the development of grounded theory, looking mainly at the purposes behind the methodology, related epistemological positions and theoretical perspectives.

While at Columbia University in the late 1950s, Glaser received extensive training in quantitative methods and middle-range theories under mentor Paul Lazarsfeld (1901–1976), a noted methodologist, and Robert Merton (1910–2003), a theorist and sociologist.<sup>55</sup> Glaser's 'rigorous positivistic methodological training in quantitative research' influenced his contribution to the development of grounded theory. Because of his experience at the University of Chicago and through his associations with Blumer and Park, Strauss brought to grounded theory his knowledge of the Chicago School field research, the perspective of symbolic interactionism and a pragmatist philosophy.<sup>56</sup>

These experiences of Glaser and Strauss moulded the methodology of grounded theory in a number of ways. First, there was 'the need to get out into the field' to understand what was really going on. Second, theory based on reality within the social world was required. Third, acknowledgment of experience as ongoing and

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<sup>52</sup> The depth of emotions endured over the 36 years or more before the men's recovery and a desire not to revisit related experiences were the main reasons given for not participating.

<sup>53</sup> In the case of these anonymous sources, careful selection was made of the data to be included in the final thesis, to guard against the possible identification of these participants.

<sup>54</sup> J. M. Morse, 'Tussles, tensions and resolutions', in J. Morse et alia (eds.), *Developing Grounded Theory: The Second Generation*, Walnut Creek, CA, Left Coast Press, 2014, p. 13.

<sup>55</sup> A. Bryant and K. C. Charmaz, 'Grounded theory in historical perspective: An epistemological account', in A. Bryant and K. C. Charmaz (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Grounded Theory*, London, UK, Sage Publications, 2007, p. 32.

<sup>56</sup> B. G. Glaser, *Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis: Emergence versus Forcing*, Mill Valley, CA, Sociology Press, 1992, p. 16; and, K. Charmaz, 'Grounded theory: Objectivist and constructivist methods', in N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publications, 2000, p. 512.

evolving was part of that reality. Fourth, the methodology should acknowledge 'the active role of persons in shaping the worlds they live in'. Fifth, the methodology should emphasize the 'complexity of life', process and variability. Sixth, relationships existed between prevailing conditions, consequent actions and derived meanings.<sup>57</sup>

In 1965, reacting to the notion that qualitative research was nothing more than a 'preliminary exploratory effort to quantitative research', Glaser and Strauss suggested 'qualitative research should be scrutinized for its usefulness in the discovery of substantive theory'.<sup>58</sup> Two years later, they published their ideas and *discovered* grounded theory.<sup>59</sup> Glaser and Strauss directed their efforts toward the 'generation of theory' derived inductively from data.<sup>60</sup>

Because of the dense writing style used in the original version of grounded theory, in 1978 Glaser clarified the methodology.<sup>61</sup> Some observers commented on the complexity of the pronouncements in these earlier texts.<sup>62</sup> However, from the outset Glaser and Strauss provided a swathe of useful guidance. Over the next 40 years, scholars studied the methodology and modified it with the result that we now have a number of versions of grounded theory.

In fact, in 1987 Strauss developed his own approach to grounded theory.<sup>63</sup> Strauss maintained the purpose of grounded theory was to develop theories to understand social phenomena at various levels of specificity.

Strauss later joined with a 16-year-long academic collaborator, Juliet Corbin, and produced the first edition of their book, *Basics of Qualitative Research*, in 1990. This text explicated grounded theory methods, articulated definitions and processes

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<sup>57</sup> A. L. Strauss and J. Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*, 1<sup>st</sup> edn, Newbury Park, CA, Sage Publications, 1990, pp. 24–5; and, Glaser, *Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis: Emergence versus Forcing*, p. 16.

<sup>58</sup> B. G. Glaser and A. L. Strauss, 'Discovery of substantive theory: A basic strategy underlying qualitative research', *American Behavioral Scientist*, Vol. 8, Issue No. 5, 1965, p. 5.

<sup>59</sup> B. G. Glaser and A. L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*, New York, NY, Aldine Pub. Co., 1967.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. vii–viii.

<sup>61</sup> B. G. Glaser, *Theoretical Sensitivity: Advances in the Methodology of Grounded Theory*, Mill Valley, CA, Sociology Press, 1978.

<sup>62</sup> For example, Charmaz notes that while Glaser 'substantially advanced explication of grounded theory methods [in 1978] ... the abstract terms and dense writing Glaser employed rendered the book inaccessible to many readers'. Charmaz, 'Grounded theory: Objectivist and constructivist methods', p. 512.

<sup>63</sup> A. L. Strauss, *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*, Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press, 1987.

clearly and enhanced access in terms of readability. This work drew heavily on the 1987 pronouncements of Strauss, although Strauss and Corbin suggested their variant of the methodology catered adequately for theme analysis, or concept development and theory generation.<sup>64</sup>

In 1992, Glaser set out to correct what he saw as *misleading* ideas espoused by Strauss and Corbin in their 1990 version of *Basics*. Glaser addressed many issues he saw as contentious.<sup>65</sup> He made clear the purpose of grounded theory is to generate theory, either substantive or formal and not simply to describe.<sup>66</sup>

Strauss and Glaser mentored the American sociologist, Kathy Charmaz during her early academic life and, over the years, the three cooperated to varying degrees.<sup>67</sup> In 2000, in reaction to the objectivist–positivist paradigms used by grounded theory researchers during the late 1980s and early 1990s, Charmaz outlined a constructivist version of the methodology.<sup>68</sup> In 2006, Charmaz further articulated her version of constructivist grounded theory.<sup>69</sup> She reaffirmed the methodology's purpose was theory construction.<sup>70</sup> Charmaz suggested 'neither data nor theories are discovered', and argued that because of our interactions with the people we study, we jointly '*construct* our grounded theories'.<sup>71</sup> Charmaz adopts a constructivist epistemology underpinned by the interpretive perspective of symbolic interactionism.

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<sup>64</sup> Strauss and Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*, p. 115. This text was influential and researchers worldwide seized upon grounded theory. K. Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis* (2006), London, UK, Sage Publications, 2009, p. 8.

<sup>65</sup> Glaser, *Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis: Emergence versus Forcing*. Glaser felt Strauss and Corbin undermined *his* intellectual property. Unfortunately, Glaser's vitriolic style leads to a complex and poorly argued presentation. Although a rift occurred between Glaser and Strauss, they soon put the matter behind them. P. N. Stern, 'In the beginning Glaser and Strauss created grounded theory', in J. Morse et alia (eds.), *Developing Grounded Theory: The Second Generation*, Walnut Creek, CA, Left Coast Press, 2014, p. 28.

<sup>66</sup> Glaser, *Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis: Emergence versus Forcing*, pp. 15–16.

<sup>67</sup> Kathy Charmaz studied at various American universities. Since 1981, she has been professor of sociology at the Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park, CA.

<sup>68</sup> Charmaz, 'Grounded theory: Objectivist and constructivist methods', pp. 509–10. Charmaz heralded her constructivist version of the methodology in 1993 in a paper titled *Studying Lived Experience Through Grounded Theory: Objectivist and Constructivist Methods*, presented at the Qualitative Research Conference, 'Studying Human Lived Experience: Symbolic Interaction and Ethnographic Research', at the University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 19–22 May 1993.

<sup>69</sup> Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis* (2006), p. 10.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

Corbin published two more editions of *Basics* after Strauss died in 1996.<sup>72</sup> The methodology's purpose was unchanged with an emphasis on description (including conceptual ordering) or theory generation, depending on the researcher's objective.<sup>73</sup>

Besides their differing purposes, variants of grounded theory use a range of epistemological positions and theoretical perspectives. Glaser's approach in 1978 and 1992 is arguably positivist, 'with its assumptions of an objective, external reality, a neutral observer who discovers data, reductionist inquiry and objectivist rendering of data'.<sup>74</sup> Various scholars have debated the unstated philosophical stance underpinning Strauss and Corbin's versions of grounded theory from 1990 and 1998, suggesting they were also positivist.<sup>75</sup> However, in 2008, from a personal perspective, Corbin, revealed her epistemological position as constructivist.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, the philosophy of pragmatism and symbolic interactionism undergird Corbin's version of the methodology.<sup>77</sup>

The movement of grounded theory from its original objectivist–positivist stance is a progressive step because it opens up the way for innovative approaches to the analysis of data, and these fresh approaches afford a better opportunity to examine multiple realities.<sup>78</sup> Nevertheless, such realities often lie outside the researcher's initial understanding and any research-based comprehension of these realities remains provisional.<sup>79</sup>

By definition, epistemological positions and the theoretical perspectives are not part of methodology. Hence, we could view the variants of grounded theory that emerged not as different forms of a methodology, but simply as different research

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<sup>72</sup> A. L. Strauss and J. M. Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for developing Grounded Theory*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publications, 1998; and, Corbin and Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*.

<sup>73</sup> Corbin and Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, pp. 53–6.

<sup>74</sup> Charmaz, 'Grounded theory: Objectivist and constructivist methods', p. 510.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 510; and, Charmaz, 'Grounded theory in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Applications for advancing social justice studies', p. 509.

<sup>76</sup> Corbin and Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, pp. 9–10.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., pp. 6–8.

<sup>78</sup> Nevertheless, although movement away from the earlier lockstep approaches represents a sensible measure, some original time-proven tools can still offer utility if mindfully employed.

<sup>79</sup> 'We may think our codes capture the empirical reality. Yet it is our view: we choose the words that constitute our codes'. Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis* (2006), p. 47.

designs or paradigms, incorporating different epistemologies and perspectives. Provided researchers state and justify their philosophical assumptions and apply them consistently, they are free to use any one of the variants.<sup>80</sup>

For the present project, other methodological approaches were considered. These included an autoethnographic approach, ethnography more generally or a case study approach.

Autoethnography involves writing about personal experiences and reflections as they relate to wider cultural issues.<sup>81</sup> Such an approach offered an opportunity to show how OAH brought together the manifold cultural, historical and emotional questions around the Forgotten Six, and to examine the subcultures that existed around death and dying, particularly within the military during the Vietnam War era.<sup>82</sup> However, as the study progressed, it became apparent the inclusion of an autoethnographic strand might potentially move the focus from family members and comrades to me, as the researcher and my OAH colleagues—this resulted in the abandonment of the autoethnographic approach.

Although the use of a more general ethnographic approach represented another option, the families had no meaningful interaction with one another, or with the men's comrades and interactions among the comrades were limited. Hence, there was an absence of a clearly identified and structured *cultural group*. Furthermore, the interaction between the researcher and the participants was actually intermittent, even though it extended over a number of years. A good ethnography requires 'extended observations of the group'.<sup>83</sup> As a result, a purely ethnographic approach was probably not suited to the task.

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<sup>80</sup> Charmaz, 'Grounded theory: Objectivist and constructivist methods', p. 510.

<sup>81</sup> C. Ellis, *The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel about Autoethnography*, Walnut Creek, CA, AltaMira Press, 2004, p. 37.

<sup>82</sup> An appreciation of the overall *culture* that pertained within Australia during the second half of the twentieth century is generally accessible through the historical literature, although the *military subculture* around death during the same period is not so accessible.

<sup>83</sup> Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, p. 68. Van Maanen points out ethnographic fieldwork is usually conducted 'over a length period . . . and consists mostly of on-going interaction with the human targets of study on their home ground'. J. Van Maanen, *Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography*, Chicago, IL, The University of Chicago Press, 1988, p. 2. Nevertheless, Van Maanen qualifies this statement in a footnote with 'Not all fieldwork is of the full-time or long-term sort'. Van Maanen, *Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography*, pp. 2, 9.

Finally, case studies involve the exploring of a 'bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time'. Such studies typically embrace only four or five cases.<sup>84</sup> Although the case study methodology received consideration initially, as the data was gathered this approach became problematic because of the wide-ranging experiences of family members, comrades and others. Selection of four or five 'cases' would not encompass the study's intended breadth.

Progressively, grounded theory underpinned by a constructivist epistemology and an interpretivist perspective (symbolic interactionist) emerged as the most suitable methodology. A critical perspective completed the research paradigm.

The methodology used herein draws primarily on the works of Strauss and Corbin, and Charmaz.<sup>85</sup> Within the stated paradigm, analysis provides *thick* description of the experiences of those involved in terms of context, actions/interactions and consequences.<sup>86</sup> Furthermore, the study exploits the methodology to theorise the experiences around the contentious issues faced by family members and comrades of the Forgotten Six between 1965 and 2011. The research paradigm as conceptualised facilitates understanding of these issues from the point of view of the persons involved, and thereby assists in achieving the study's aims.

## **METHODS**

Methods consist in the techniques or procedures used to gather and analyse data related to a research question.<sup>87</sup>

Data to support this study derived from a variety of sources, the main source being interviews given by 48 relevant individuals. Participants included nine family members and 18 comrades of the men, 10 OAH members, two Government Ministers

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<sup>84</sup> Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, pp. 73–6.

<sup>85</sup> Strauss and Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*; Strauss and Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for developing Grounded Theory*; Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis* (2006); and, Corbin and Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*.

<sup>86</sup> *Thick* description relies on the provision of exceedingly detailed accounts of events and experiences enabling the observer/researcher to 'pick his way' through 'piled up structures of inference and implication'. Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, pp. 5–7. *Thick* descriptions also provide a reliable basis for others to consider the trustworthiness of the researcher's interpretations.

<sup>87</sup> Crotty, *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process* (1998), p. 3.

and one senior departmental staff member, five ADF members and three other individuals with relevant knowledge.<sup>88</sup> The 27 family members and comrades who gave interviews included 24 subjects.<sup>89</sup> Questionnaires completed by these 27 participants represented another important data source.

Potential participants were identified based on their likely capacity to inform the study, and the best possible efforts were made to glean representative input from the various categories of informants.<sup>90</sup> No parents of the Forgotten Six were available for interview; however, documentary footage recorded in 1984 contains interviews with three parents and one sibling.<sup>91</sup> The widows of Parker, Gillson and Gillespie were alive and two participated in the construction of the stories embedded in this study. The initial lack of participation by Government and ADF representatives had the potential to affect the study adversely, particularly in light of possible criticism of the ADF's management of MIA matters. This resulted in the Principal Supervisor issuing invitations to eight officials to participate.<sup>92</sup>

Of the 37 subjects identified earlier, eight were dead or not in a psychological or physical state to be able to participate in the interviews effectively. To examine the behaviours and attitudes of these eight subjects, and the five living subjects who chose not to participate, information from the public domain, as recorded in various primary and secondary sources was used.<sup>93</sup>

Relevant historical literature provided information around some issues identified through the conceptual framework.<sup>94</sup> Primary sources, including correspondence and

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<sup>88</sup> The extent of involvement in the men's loss and/or their recovery provided the rationale for selection of the 18 participants from within OAH, the Government and the ADF.

<sup>89</sup> The 27 family members and comrades who provided interviews included one relative and two of the men's comrades who were not subjects.

<sup>90</sup> Initial analysis revealed the data provided by the original panel of interviewees did not fully meet the study's requirements, and the need to recruit other participants became apparent.

<sup>91</sup> H. Piper, 'MIA: Missing-in-Action', Released 1984, Australian Broadcasting Commission, Sydney, NSW, [TV Documentary].

<sup>92</sup> I initially considered it might be difficult to recruit participants from within the ranks of the Government and the ADF. However, those invited to participate happily accepted their invitations and were all very supportive.

<sup>93</sup> Additionally and occasionally, to treat dead, incapable or non-participating subjects, the study draws on information provided by others. Such information provided by close relatives either through their respective questionnaires or during interviews assisted in dealing with these lacunas.

<sup>94</sup> For example, the historical literature provided contextual and person-specific information. More specifically, this literature provided details regarding the men's loss and indications as to why their comrades and/or the authorities failed to recover the men or their remains during and

media reports were useful. A number of newspaper articles published between 1965 and 2011 provided valuable insights into the subjects' contemporaneous perceptions. E-mails from some of the subjects and participants were informative, as were the diaries and journals kept by some of them. Photographs, memorials and other memorabilia provided an insight into the lives of the families and comrades and the events surrounding the men's loss and eventual recovery. Besides the 1984 documentary, two other TV documentaries regarding three of the Australian–Vietnam MIA cases, recorded in 2007, provided useful data. The embedded interviews with family members and comrades were particularly informative.<sup>95</sup> Copies of official letters provided useful information that assisted in understanding the behaviour of the Government and the defence hierarchy regarding the initiation and conduct of searches for the Forgotten Six.<sup>96</sup>

Scrutiny of the conceptual framework highlighted issues for inclusion in the questionnaires, by means of which 27 participants provided details that would have been difficult or disruptive to elicit during interviews.<sup>97</sup> Specifically, the questionnaires sought basic personal information and family history details, including details on deceased family members. The questionnaire also sought details related to factors such as religiosity, ethnicity and military service. Each of these factors had the potential to influence interpretations of death and expressions of grief.<sup>98</sup>

A semi-structured style of interviewing was employed. Successful conduct of these interviews was critical because they gave voice to members of the families of the

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after the War. The literature also provided an understanding of relevant cultural, societal and political factors that influenced the actions of the family members, comrades and others over the years. A significant issue was the culture surrounding death from the early 1900s until recent times. In addition, ADF policy documents from 1996 onwards provided an understanding of the practices used to manage MIA matters.

<sup>95</sup> B. Hawkins, 'Behind Enemy Lines: Part 1', *Australian Story*, Released 8 Oct. 2007, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Sydney, NSW, [TV Documentary], <<http://www.abc.net.au/austory/specials/behindenemylines2/default.htm>>, accessed 10 Aug. 2010; and, B. Hawkins, 'Behind Enemy Lines: Part 2', *Australian Story*, Released 15 Oct. 2007, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Sydney, NSW, [TV Documentary], <<http://www.abc.net.au/austory/specials/behindenemylines2/default.htm>>, accessed 10 Aug. 2010.

<sup>96</sup> With the responsible Minister's support, direct requests to the Department of Defence and the respective Service HQ and to the Australian Embassy in Hanoi yielded further useful information on a number of issues.

<sup>97</sup> Participants received the questionnaire along with their invitation to participate in the study.

<sup>98</sup> Although my perception as to what was relevant influenced the questionnaire's design, respondents had the opportunity to provide 'additional detail' they considered relevant. Early in the data gathering process, emergent concepts suggested some minor changes to the questionnaires.



Forgotten Six and their comrades. I hoped they would tell me things I did not know and contradict some of the things I expected to hear. I was not disappointed. With the much-welcomed recovery, repatriation and commemoration of the Forgotten Six, family members and comrades felt free to speak openly and emotionally about their experiences.<sup>99</sup>

On receipt of the participants' informed consent, I arranged and conducted 50 interviews (involving 48 participants), Australia-wide, between 2008 and 2011.<sup>100</sup> Interviews took place in the participants' homes (29), their offices (8), my home (1) or in a neutral location (12). Each of the interviews was audiotaped. A list of open-ended questions, gleaned from the conceptual framework, guided the interviews.<sup>101</sup> I tried to avoid subordinating the interviewee's voice by over-use of such questions; however, these guiding questions were often not required.

The interviews focused on the interaction between family members, comrades, the Forgotten Six and others. In addition, contemporary cultural and historical settings were considered through these interviews, which elicited details of particular and often unique contexts in which individuals experienced their various lived events.<sup>102</sup> The interviews were more of an open discourse between the interviewee and the interviewer. Interviewees occasionally launched a narrative account of their experiences and these narratives were particularly informative because they showed how the participants attempted to make meaning out of their experiences: identifying some of the conflicts and issues they faced, taking action to resolve such matters and evaluating their actions. I accepted 'when someone tells a story, he or she shapes,

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<sup>99</sup> A story presented during an interview in a tension-free setting might be different from the story told to the same interviewer at a time where tensions existed. S. E. Chase, 'Narrative inquiry: Multiple lenses, approaches, voices', in N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn, Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publications, 2005, p. 657.

<sup>100</sup> Two individuals took part in one interview and three gave two interviews each.

<sup>101</sup> Although analysis did not start formally until after the completion of approximately 10 interviews, tentative analysis early in the process led to changes in the interview questions to explore emerging or undiscovered concepts.

<sup>102</sup> Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, p. 21. During interviews and subsequent discussions, some participants provided wide-ranging data, not only about their own experiences but also about how they viewed *other players*. Such information necessarily received careful and sensitive treatment. Participants sometimes broached difficult topics.

constructs and performs the self, experience and reality'.<sup>103</sup> In the process, there is sometimes a re-engineering of the narrator's storied identity.<sup>104</sup>

Certain memory effects and cognitive processes sometimes affected recollections. Shortly after experiencing lived events, family individuals created autobiographical memories, manipulated them over the years and recalled them again during the interviews. Memory theory suggests access to memories that conflict with the working self's contemporaneous goals or ones that are at odds with the individual's self-image, might be inhibited.<sup>105</sup> Furthermore, symbolic interaction suggests feedback from others contributes to the formation of a person's self-image—the 'me' created through social interaction. Hence, even if an interviewee recalled memories that were at odds with their extant self-image or at least with the image they were trying to project, in the interest of protecting their self-image, they may have been reluctant to reveal such conflicting information. Hence, incomplete recall and selective presentation of information influenced the extent and quality of the data delivered during the interviews. Furthermore, individuals sometimes constructed interpretations that were inconsistent with the interpretations of others and, in some cases, inconsistent with recorded *fact*.

Where necessary and possible, triangulation of contentious items with data from other sources assisted in assessing the reliability of the participants' recollections. Consideration of the data at the conceptual level and looking for consistency and logical development of emergent themes also enabled a level of interpretive and reported coherence.<sup>106</sup>

Furthermore, from a practical point of view, we need to acknowledge 'place' as the site of participants' lived events and the context in which they reported such events. This is also important as the stories around the Forgotten Six traverse a lengthy period, from 1965 to 2011. Hence, in terms of the latter, date-time stamps usefully recorded the times of origin and reporting.

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<sup>103</sup> Chase, 'Narrative inquiry: Multiple lenses, approaches, voices', p. 657.

<sup>104</sup> C. K. Riessman, *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences*, Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publications, 2008, pp. 8–9. This re-engineering of narratives sometimes includes attempts to persuade the listener that the speaker was not responsible for their misdeeds.

<sup>105</sup> M. A. Conway, 'Memory and the self', *Journal of Memory and Language*, Vol. 53, Issue No. 4, 2005, p. 605.

<sup>106</sup> Riessman, *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences*, p. 189.

Two assistants, supplemented by a commercial agency with strict rules to ensure confidentiality, transcribed the interviews as soon as possible after each batch was completed.<sup>107</sup> Rapid turnaround helped to recall the mood of the occasion and the presence of the audio during the subsequent analysis further assisted in this regard.

Data from the 27 questionnaires provided by family members and comrades, supplemented by information gathered from a number of secondary sources, provided the detail to define the families' structures at critical times and to populate the prosopographies of persons of interest. The volume of data to be analysed was daunting; however, the software package NVivo, from QSR International, provided an excellent tool for data management.<sup>108</sup>

Over the years, grounded theory scholars suggested various approaches to data analysis, focusing on the types of coding, the rationale for using them and accompanying techniques. The following presents an overview of these approaches as they relate to this study. Selection of methods was eclectic based simply on the criteria that methods fitted the purpose, within the prevailing research paradigm.<sup>109</sup>

As early as 1965, Glaser and Strauss suggested researchers need theoretical sensitivity in order to 'conceptualise and formulate theory as it emerges from the data'.<sup>110</sup> According to Strauss and Corbin, theoretical sensitivity is a personal quality of the researcher related to the meanings ascribed to data and the subtleties of such meanings. Theoretical sensitivity derives from three main sources: relevant literature,

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<sup>107</sup> To afford participants the opportunity to deny the use of potentially contentious or sensitive information, they reviewed their interview transcripts and most gave consent to the use of their information without changes. A few requested changes, which the amended transcript duly reflected.

<sup>108</sup> NVivo tracked the analysis of the interviews throughout. Data from the questionnaires, entered to NVivo, subsequently enabled an exploration of the database using the characteristics of the subjects and participants. NVivo also provided a facility for managing memos and for modelling.

<sup>109</sup> Nevertheless, the techniques employed mainly draw mainly on the work of Strauss and Corbin. Strauss, *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*; Strauss and Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*; Strauss and Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for developing Grounded Theory* and, Corbin and Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*.

<sup>110</sup> Glaser and Strauss, 'Discovery of substantive theory: A basic strategy underlying qualitative research', p. 46.

professional experience and personal experience.<sup>111</sup> Charmaz suggests the very act of engaging with the data and 'theorising' possibilities increases theoretical sensitivity.<sup>112</sup>

My prior experience with MIA matters, in particular my dealings with members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades provided a degree of theoretical sensitivity. In addition, the seven years of lobbying the Government and dealing with the bureaucracy on MIA matters complemented this sensitivity. Furthermore, thanks to my 23 years of military service, I understood how Defence functioned and in particular the machinations within Army.

In 1978, although Glaser pointed out theoretical sensitivity is 'increased by being steeped in the literature' he added analysts should not force or select data 'to fit pre-conceived or pre-existent categories'.<sup>113</sup> In 1992, Glaser argued the researcher should delay reviewing literature related to the substantive area until after completion of data analysis, to facilitate the emergence of what is likely to be important in the study.<sup>114</sup> Other scholars agree.<sup>115</sup>

Reading some of the literature early in the research process assisted in defining the basic concepts and provided a degree of theoretical sensitivity. Furthermore, historical literature fed the analysis, especially in terms of relevant contexts and intervening conditions associated with certain events. However, extensive engagement with the literature dealing with bereavement and grief took place only after the completion of the data analysis, when extant theories provided the basis for identifying consistencies and contradictions in the study's findings.

Various scholars suggested a range of coding strategies to handle particularly large and cumbersome amounts of data, some of which are specifically applicable to grounded theory.

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<sup>111</sup> Strauss and Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*, pp. 41–3.

<sup>112</sup> Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis* (2006), p. 135.

<sup>113</sup> Glaser, *Theoretical Sensitivity: Advances in the Methodology of Grounded Theory*, pp. 3–4, 31.

<sup>114</sup> Glaser, *Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis: Emergence versus Forcing*, p. 31.

<sup>115</sup> Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis* (2006), pp. 165–6; and, Corbin and Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, pp. 36–7.

Glaser and Strauss initially explained their methods of coding and analysis in 1967.<sup>116</sup> In 1978, Glaser expanded on his coding methods identifying two types, first, substantive coding, which consists of open and selective coding; and second, theoretical coding.<sup>117</sup> Due to their complexity, implementation of these coding strategies is difficult.<sup>118</sup> Nevertheless, such knowledge guided many scholars.

In 1987, Strauss introduced three types of coding, naming them open coding, axial coding and selective coding. Strauss clearly articulated his coding paradigm: conditions, interactions, strategies and tactics, and consequences. He made the point that axial coding was a technique to build 'a dense texture of relationships' between a given category (the 'axis') and other categories and sub-categories, using the grounded theory paradigm.<sup>119</sup>

In 1990 and again in 1998, Strauss and Corbin reiterated the three types of coding previously offered by Strauss.<sup>120</sup> Open coding identifies concepts within the data; logically subsumes such concepts into more manageable *categories*, at a higher level of abstraction; and, develops such categories by identifying their properties and their dimensions.<sup>121</sup> While open coding breaks the data down, axial coding puts them back together by making connections between related categories, with the aim of giving specificity to the main category, the central phenomenon being investigated. To enable this re-construction, Strauss and Corbin articulated 'a coding paradigm involving conditions, context, action/interactional strategies and consequences'.<sup>122</sup> Selective coding consists in 'selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other

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<sup>116</sup> Glaser and Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*, pp. 101–15.

<sup>117</sup> Glaser, *Theoretical Sensitivity: Advances in the Methodology of Grounded Theory*, pp. 55–82. As part of open coding, the researcher identifies the main phenomenon, which emerges from the data. Subsequent data gathering and selective coding focus on the core phenomenon. Theoretical coding conceptualises 'how substantive codes may relate to each other as hypotheses to be integrated into a theory'.

<sup>118</sup> Charmaz, 'Grounded theory: Objectivist and constructivist methods', p. 512.

<sup>119</sup> Strauss, *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*, pp. 27–8, 32–3, 64.

<sup>120</sup> Strauss and Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*, p. 58; and, Strauss and Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for developing Grounded Theory*, p. 32.

<sup>121</sup> Strauss and Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*, pp. 61–74; and, Strauss and Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for developing Grounded Theory*, pp. 101–21.

<sup>122</sup> Strauss and Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*, pp. 96–115; and, Strauss and Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for developing Grounded Theory*, pp. 123–42.

categories, validating those relationships and filling in categories that need further refinement and development', to generate a grounded theory.<sup>123</sup>

In 1992, Glaser challenged some additional techniques introduced by Strauss and Corbin in 1990, suggesting the constant comparative method provides sufficient means to identify categories and their properties: 'And that is all there is to it'.<sup>124</sup>

Axial coding 'received some accolades and considerable criticism'.<sup>125</sup> These criticisms did not accept that the components of Strauss and Corbin's paradigm simply provided a convenient and relevant structure to assist in sorting and synthesising voluminous data to develop a major category.<sup>126</sup> The paradigm in reality captures relationships between causal conditions, context, action/interaction and outcomes, and reflects the temporal linkages between the studied phenomena. Its use does not inhibit analysis in any way whatsoever because the concepts, categories and theory emerge from the data.

In 2006, Charmaz identified her coding methods, which consist of two phases. First, initial coding unearths the concepts and categories and potentially establishes an analytical framework within which to consider the data, while looking for 'analytic ideas to pursue further data collection and analysis'.<sup>127</sup> Focused coding uses the more significant codes from initial coding and seeks to make analytic sense of them.<sup>128</sup> Subsequently, theoretical coding uses these categories and specifies relationships between them to help the researcher 'tell an analytic story that has coherence'.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Strauss and Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*, pp. 116–42; and, Strauss and Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for developing Grounded Theory*, pp. 143–61. Strauss and Corbin articulate their method of identifying the core phenomenon. This involves developing a descriptive narrative about the issues studied and rendering a conceptualization of the story.

<sup>124</sup> Glaser, *Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis: Emergence versus Forcing*, p. 43.

<sup>125</sup> Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, p. 147.

<sup>126</sup> The use of paradigms is fundamental in analysis and in any case, the coding families articulated by Glaser in 1978 actually included the components of Strauss and Corbin's paradigm. Glaser, *Theoretical Sensitivity: Advances in the Methodology of Grounded Theory*, pp. 72–82.

<sup>127</sup> Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis* (2006), pp. 46–57. The second edition of *Constructing Grounded Theory* (Charmaz 2014) did not become available until after the analysis of data was completed.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 57–8.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63. These coding steps outlined by Charmaz essentially follow the logic espoused by Strauss and Corbin.

In the latest edition of *Basics*, Corbin retains open coding and axial coding, as espoused in 1990 and 1998, acknowledging they take place simultaneously.<sup>130</sup> In addition, she re-labels selective coding as 'Integration'.<sup>131</sup> However, the techniques virtually remain unchanged.

Hence, over the years scholars proposed various coding strategies, driven to a considerable extent by their adopted research paradigm. I use open coding, axial coding and integration (selective coding) as espoused by Strauss and Corbin, supplemented by the coding techniques offered by Charmaz. These methods sit well with the constructivist–interpretivist paradigm.

To support the analytical process more generally, various scholars proposed a range of practical, common sense techniques and elaborated a number of analytical concepts.<sup>132</sup> Although not a new technique, the constant comparative method of joint coding and analysis is the mainstay of the analytical processes underpinning grounded theory.<sup>133</sup> I use the constant comparative method extensively. Another much-vaunted technique is the use of memos to document the products of the stages of analysis.<sup>134</sup> I necessarily use memos.

The fundamental notion of *process* is the temporal linking of sequences of goal-related actions/interactions in response to changes in structural conditions (causal conditions, context and intervening conditions).<sup>135</sup> In some instances, the outcomes of

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<sup>130</sup> Corbin and Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, pp. 159–60, 195, 198–9.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 87, 103–6.

<sup>132</sup> Without wanting to deprecate the work of grounded theory scholars, many of the techniques they espouse represent fundamental techniques used in other spheres of endeavour. Nevertheless, the identification of such concepts and their exposition consolidates our understanding of them and potentially offers an opportunity for their further development.

<sup>133</sup> Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis* (2006), p. 54; and, Corbin and Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, pp. 73–4, 77–8. The aim of the constant comparative process for Glaser and Strauss was specifically to generate theory. Glaser and Strauss, 'Discovery of substantive theory: A basic strategy underlying qualitative research', pp. 1, 21–2. Other scholars use the constant comparative process in a more general sense.

<sup>134</sup> Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis* (2006), pp. 72–95; and, Corbin and Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, pp. 117–41.

<sup>135</sup> Strauss and Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*, p. 143. In 2008, Corbin included emotions along with actions/interactions when discussing process. Corbin and Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, pp. 87, 96–7. Charmaz refers to *Process* as 'unfolding temporal sequences ... that lead to change'. Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis* (2006), p. 10.

actions/interactions cause or contribute to changes in these structural conditions. The lengthy period traversed by this study makes *process* important.

Theoretical sampling consists in the 'process of data collection ... whereby the analyst collects, codes and analyses his data and decides what data to collect next in order to develop his theory as it emerges'.<sup>136</sup> Other uses of theoretical sampling include enhancing the properties of a concept, identifying relationships between concepts and developing relevant concepts to support theory construction.<sup>137</sup> Theoretical saturation of a category provides the 'criterion for when to stop sampling the different groups pertinent to a [particular] category'. This occurs when no additional data relevant to the subject category emerge.<sup>138</sup> In the context of this study, theoretical sampling enabled identification of further data required to describe important concepts and categories and to support emerging theory. Thereafter, sampling ceased based on assessments of the degree of theoretical saturation of various categories.<sup>139</sup>

The grounded theory paradigm espoused by Strauss and Corbin provides the framework to relate a central category to its subsidiary categories.<sup>140</sup> In 2008, Corbin explicates the 'paradigm' in terms of context (causal conditions, intervening conditions), actions/interactions and outcomes. Corbin suggests the paradigm as a strategy to integrate 'structure with process'.<sup>141</sup> Hence, the paradigm is particularly useful in the context of this study.

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<sup>136</sup> Glaser and Strauss, 'Discovery of substantive theory: A basic strategy underlying qualitative research', p. 45.

<sup>137</sup> Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis* (2006), pp. 96–121; and, Corbin and Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, pp. 143–57.

<sup>138</sup> Glaser and Strauss, 'Discovery of substantive theory: A basic strategy underlying qualitative research', p. 61; Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis* (2006), p. 113; and, Corbin and Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, pp. 149–50.

<sup>139</sup> The techniques of theoretical sampling and theoretical saturation appear in other spheres of endeavour. For example, within the military, theoretical sampling and saturation provide the basis for formulation of Intelligence Collection Plans, which aim to assemble relevant information for operational planning purposes.

<sup>140</sup> Strauss and Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*, pp. 99–107, 117–18, 124–8. Strauss and Corbin call on their paradigm to support axial and selective coding. Other scholars have articulated other models, consisting of 'theoretical codes' that can be used to relate 'substantive codes' to one another. Glaser, *Theoretical Sensitivity: Advances in the Methodology of Grounded Theory*, pp. 72–82; and, Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis* (2006), p. 63.

<sup>141</sup> Corbin and Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, pp. 87–90.



The conditional matrix offered by Strauss and Corbin provides a simple explanatory tool that demonstrates the place of micro and macro contextual factors that derive from the external environment, highlighting the need to consider interactions between these external factors and the core phenomenon.<sup>142</sup> Beyond the direct experiences of family members and comrades of the Forgotten Six, there were other events that impinged on their stories. This study needed to identify such issues to appreciate the overall context in which the studied phenomena emerged.<sup>143</sup>

In conclusion, dependability, confirmability, credibility and transferability represent appropriate criteria by which to evaluate qualitative research within the constructivist-interpretivist paradigm.<sup>144</sup> The quality of this research relies on the degree to which these criteria are met especially dependability, confirmability and credibility.

## **DEVELOPING A WRITING STYLE**

The drafting of chapters of this thesis began early in the research process and an appropriate writing style progressively emerged. Two factors guided this emergent style, first, the target audience, and second, the desired outcomes of the research.<sup>145</sup>

I am primarily writing for an audience interested in two issues: first, ambiguous loss and unresolved grief around service personnel declared as KIA (BNR) or MIA during wartime; and second, the ambiguity and guilt experienced by combatants because of their failure to recover fallen comrades during combat operations—specifically during the Vietnam War. This audience includes academics and laypersons, as well as policy makers dealing with MIA issues at the national level.

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<sup>142</sup> Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis* (2006), p. 118; and, Corbin and Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, pp. 90–5.

<sup>143</sup> Such matters included the attitudes of other nations including the Vietnamese toward MIA matters, ADF policy and related actions, the attitudes of the ex-service organisations and interactions between the bureaucracy and OAH. Although members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades may have had a general awareness of these matters, they did not necessarily possess any in-depth comprehension of them.

<sup>144</sup> Y. S. Lincoln and E. G. Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, Beverly Hills, CA, Sage Publications, 1985, pp. 300–1; Y. S. Lincoln, 'Emerging criteria for quality in qualitative and interpretive research', *Qualitative Inquiry*, Vol. 1, 1995, pp. 276–7; N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln, 'Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research', in N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn, Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publications, 2005, pp. 22–4; and, Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, pp. 202–4, 207–9.

<sup>145</sup> Miles and Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis*, pp. 299–301.

Hence, the writing needs to be sufficiently clear and concise, to support the lines of argument presented and furthermore, the style needs to be simple and engaging.

Three intended outcomes of this research influenced the writing style. First, the desire to give voice to the members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades was paramount. Second, the writing must display honesty and authenticity and reflect ethical conduct throughout the research process. Third, the writing should enable readers to engage with the stories embedded in this study. *Thick descriptions* of the lived world and associated thoughts, emotions and behaviours of family members, comrades and others provide the basis for these embedded stories. These narratives provide the vehicle to transport the experiences of family members, comrades and others to the reader.<sup>146</sup> In general, the use of the narrative sits comfortably with *process* and the grounded theory paradigm.

In short, the writing strives for clarity, brevity and simplicity. While being creative, the writing embodies persuasiveness and enables vicarious experiencing. The aim is to have the reader, in a moment of trust engage with my interpretations of the events around the stories of the members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades.

## **SUMMARY**

This is a qualitative study. The design sets out the study's aim and articulates the research question. The study's conceptual framework derives from the research question, supplemented by experience and commonsense.

A number of conceptual issues are relevant to the design of this study. The epistemological position adopted is constructivism. The philosophy of pragmatism and an interpretative perspective, specifically symbolic interactionism, underpin the study, accompanied in part by a critical perspective. This study adopts a deontological approach to matters ethical. Observations and theories from the literature, particularly extant theories regarding bereavement and grief, provide a basis for testing the study's findings.

Grounded theory is the chosen methodology, which enables *thick description* of experiences of family members, comrades and others over 36 years or more,

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<sup>146</sup> D. J. Clandinin and F. M. Connelly, *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research*, San Francisco, CA, Jossey-Bass, 2000, as cited in Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, p. 18.

encompassing the period before and after the repatriation of the Forgotten Six. In addition, this methodology, through *thick description*, facilitates a critical examination of the authorities' role in the men's recovery and repatriation. Furthermore, the use of grounded theory enables the identification of the core phenomenon at the heart of this study and facilitates the scrutiny of that phenomenon.







Human sources provided most of the data, through interviews with 48 participants and 27 questionnaires completed by family members and comrades. Data from other primary and secondary sources supplement this data. This chapter explained the methods and tools used to analyse the data, focusing on the types of coding. The discussion highlights the need to acknowledge *process* and describes the use of certain additional tools.

## CHAPTER 4: 'LIVING WITH THE UN-DEAD'

### INTRODUCTION

During the Vietnam War (1962–75), the Australian Defence Force declared two of its members as KIA (BNR) and four as MIA. Table 4–1 outlines these six cases.

**Table 4–1: The Six Australian Servicemen not recovered during the Vietnam War**

					
LCPL Richard Parker (1941–1965)	PTE Peter Gillson (1945–1965)	PTE David Fisher (1946– 1969)	FLGOFF Michael Herbert (1946– 1970)	PLTOFF Robert Carver (1946– 1970)	LCPL John Gillespie (1947– 1971)
1 RAR	1 RAR	3 Special Air Service (SAS) Squadron	2 Squadron (RAAF)	2 Squadron (RAAF)	8 Field Ambulance
MIA	KIA (BNR)	MIA	MIA	MIA	KIA (BNR)
Lost 8 Nov. 1965	Lost 8 Nov. 1965	Lost 27 Sept. 1969	Lost 3 Nov. 1970	Lost 3 Nov. 1970	Lost 17 Apr. 1971

The six missing men presumably met violent deaths far from home; however, in the absence of their bodies, nobody could say definitely, at least initially, whether the men were dead. If they were dead, their remains were 'somewhere in Vietnam'. Ambiguity prevailed. The men were physically absent but psychologically present.<sup>1</sup> Effectively the men were 'un-dead'.<sup>2</sup>

Our research question directs our attention to the ways in which family members and comrades of the Forgotten Six dealt with the men's loss and non-

<sup>1</sup> This study appropriates the notions of being 'physically absent' and 'psychologically present' from Boss. Boss, *Ambiguous Loss: Learning to Live with Unresolved Grief* (1999), p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Persons who go Missing-in-Action, who were often 'victims of trauma' and who were not properly laid to rest are, according to Delbo, 'un-dead'. C. Delbo, *Days and Memory*, Evanston, IL, Marlboro Press, 2001, as cited in a seminar discussion, 'Trauma and memory: Historical and psychoanalytic perspectives', presented by Professor Robert Pascoe on 16 June 2009.

recovery. This chapter considers those issues, focusing on the practical actions/interactions of family members and comrades, the emotions they experienced and some of their cognitive processes, as they went about their lives, 'living with the un-dead'.

## **PRIMARY CAUSAL CONDITIONS**

The primary cause that gave rise to the phenomenon of 'Living with the Un-dead', the men's loss and non-recovery, warrants examination. Two issues are relevant: first, the efforts made to recover the men during the War, and second, the system used to classify casualties.<sup>3</sup>

Examination of the recovery efforts during the War illuminates the difficulties involved in recovering the men or their remains, and the reasons why such efforts were unsuccessful. First, the major impediment to the recovery of the men's bodies during the War was the stubborn fact that Australian forces did not have safe access to the loss incident sites. Second, limited resource availability inhibited post-combat recoveries. Third, friendly forces undertook recovery operations only where there was a possibility of recovering casualties alive. Finally, the War's outcomes negated any opportunity to conduct further searches for the Forgotten Six, until at least 1984.<sup>4</sup> Generally, members of the men's families and their comrades were not fully aware of the efforts made to recover the men—as far as most were concerned, the Defence Force simply failed to locate the men or their remains. Ambiguity persisted.

The manner in which officialdom classified casualties affected survivors over the years. The authorities used a range of classifications such as KIA, 'Killed Accidentally', 'Missing, believed killed' and MIA.<sup>5</sup> The loss incidents' outcomes, including associated recovery efforts, provided the basis for the casualty classifications, effectively summarising the loss incidents. At least initially, these classifications informed the family members and comrades of the men's fate. Although the lack of

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<sup>3</sup> Appendix B contains details regarding efforts made during the War to recover the men. Appendix D provides further background to the system of casualty classifications, the classifications ascribed to the six men and the changes to such classifications.

<sup>4</sup> On 30 Apr. 1975, the Government of South Vietnam surrendered unconditionally and after that date, neither Australia nor her allies controlled the battlefield where the missing soldiers lay.

<sup>5</sup> NAA: A6913, 1.

information precluded the Defence Force from ascribing definitive classifications, the facility existed to issue presumptions of death based on available information.<sup>6</sup>

Professional standards required the appropriate authority to conduct, at the earliest opportunity, a formal investigation into any loss incident that was not clear-cut. Consequently, the Defence Force had access to a considerable albeit varied amount of information about each of the cases. The family members and comrades needed information on which to predicate their understandings of the men's likely fate and to formulate their expectations about their possible recovery, whether dead or alive. Although the casualty classifications provided an initial summary of the loss incidents' outcomes, in most cases the authorities only progressively and selectively provided further detail.

## **BACKGROUND**

Several factors determined the context in which members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades managed 'living with the un-dead'. First, the cultural, social and political changes in Australia during the second half of the twentieth century provided the overall environment in which family members and comrades lived. Second, the structures of the families related to the Forgotten Six and the personal attributes of family members and comrades determined their individual contexts.

The cultural, social and political environments within Australia changed significantly during the second half of the twentieth century. Largely because of post-war migration, Australia became more culturally diverse, and, after the late 1970s, a more open expression of grief replaced the culture of death denial, which had persisted since the First World War. The aging Australian population became more urbanised and more secular, and women assumed greater roles in all aspects of society. Across the century, long-distance communication facilities improved, culminating with the progressive introduction of the internet from the late 1980s. Furthermore, air travel dramatically accelerated the mobility of Australians. These developments facilitated the flow of information and ideas and enhanced connectedness between people. Politically, Australia established herself on the international stage, adopting a policy of multilateralism but with a focus on South East Asia and the west Pacific region, while maintaining bilateral ties with her traditional allies.

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<sup>6</sup> Attorney-General's Department, 'Defence (Certification of Deaths) Regulations 1953', Australasian Legal Information Institute, Canberra, ACT, <[http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol\\_reg/dodr1953354/s4.html](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_reg/dodr1953354/s4.html)>, accessed 15 Feb. 2011.

The families comprised of individuals operating within a system and although each family member experienced their loss differently, the family structures held implications for the type and effectiveness of the actions/interactions that individuals undertook to manage their contentious issues.<sup>7</sup> This study employs the concept of 'primary bereaved' to summarise the changing family structures.<sup>8</sup> Table 4–2 shows the primary bereaved at various times. Even though the deaths of some parents and the older siblings of some of the men decremented the number of primary bereaved, in 2001 a definite dependency still existed, comprising of slightly more than three-quarters of the original primary bereaved.

**Table 4–2: Primary Bereaved Parties while 'Living with the Un-dead'**

FAMILY	TIME OF COUNT		
	TIME OF THE LOSS INCIDENT	1985	2001
Parker's Birth Family	1	1	1
Parker's Conjugal Family	1	1	1
Gillson's Birth Family	6	5	4
Gillson's Conjugal Family	2	2	2
Fisher's Birth Family	5	4	4
Herbert's Birth Family	4	4	4
Carver's Birth Family	3	3	1
Gillespie's Birth Family	6	5	4
Gillespie's Conjugal Family	2	2	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>23</b>

Certain personal attributes and the general life situations of the family members and comrades influenced their actions/interactions and their degree of religiosity was a

<sup>7</sup> The term 'families' refers to the wider social unit based on 'interdependent relationships, by virtue of connections through blood, marriage, domestic circumstances, or affection'. Larsson, *Shattered ANZACs: Living with the Scars of War*, p. 20. This definition extends the concept of the family beyond the more frequently used and restrictive definition wherein co-residency of members of a social unit is required to delimit a 'family'. Broderick, *Understanding Family Process: Basics of Family Systems Theory*, pp. 51–3.

<sup>8</sup> The primary bereaved parties consist of persons alive at a particular point in time within the decedents' birth families and, in the cases of Parker, Gillson and Gillespie, within their conjugal families. Where applicable, stepparents are included as primary bereaved. In addition, any stepbrothers, stepsisters, half-brothers and half-sisters are also included.

potentially significant factor. In a questionnaire administered at the time of recruitment, participants reported their religiosity and, for family members, the religiosity of deceased parents.<sup>9</sup> Participants rated religiosity using the scale shown in Table 4–3.

**Table 4–3: Ratings of Religiosity**

RELIGION	CODE	CRITERIA
Christian: Very Religious	VR	Weekly Church Attendance
Christian: Religious	R	The teachings of the religion accepted with occasional Church attendance
Christian: Not Practising	NP	No Church attendance regardless of level of belief
Agnostic	AGNOS	
Atheist	ATHST	
Other Convictions	OC	Has firm spiritual convictions or a philosophical base other than Christianity

All family members in this study were Christians, with 71% rated as 'Religious' or 'Very Religious', and 29% were 'Non Practising'.

Other attributes such as ethnicity, familial relationships and prior military experience potentially influenced the behaviours of family members.

The six men's parents were born in Australia, except for Harold Heath (Parker's father) who was born in Manchester, England; William Fisher (Fisher's father) who was born in Gillingham, England; and Leslie Gillson (Gillson's father) who was born in Canada, but migrated at an early age. Furthermore, traces of Irish ancestry were present in the Herbert and Gillespie families.

Bowlby describes 'attachment' as an enduring 'psychological connectedness between human beings'.<sup>10</sup> Within the six families, before the loss incidents various relationships developed between family members and the decedents.<sup>11</sup> Attachment

<sup>9</sup> Appendix A contains details of the religiosity of family members. Since none of the participants indicated they experienced any change in their religious convictions after the men were lost, religiosity was taken as a constant throughout the subject individuals' lives.

<sup>10</sup> Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss Vol. 1: Attachment*, p. 194.

<sup>11</sup> For the men's parents, these relationships began with the decedents' birth and ended at the time of the loss incidents or the parents'. In the cases of siblings born after the decedent this relationships were of a lesser duration and, with the wives of the three men who were married, the durations shortened further. Although two of the men had children, they were of tender years and had no 'relationship' with their fathers.



between the decedents and their parents, particularly between the birth mothers and their sons, was significant, but two of the mothers predeceased their sons and one had 'moved on'.<sup>12</sup> The relationships within families were generally positive and the concept of attachment is applicable; however, in at least one instance there was an antagonistic relationship between one sibling and the associated member of the Forgotten Six.<sup>13</sup>

The average duration of the widows' relationships with the decedents was five years, with a range between two and nine years. As indicated in Table 4–4, the three widows experienced the state of matrimony with the decedents for an average of just over two years and seven months.

**Table 4–4: Length of Time over which the Decedents were married**

DECEDENT	YEARS MARRIED
Parker	3.1
Gillson	0.8
Gillespie	3.9
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>2.6</b>

Considering the intimacy of marriage, the quality of the relationships experienced by the widows was obviously different to that experienced by other family members. The widows' ages at the time of their husbands' deaths were between 18 and 22.<sup>14</sup> How significant was the bonding between these women and their husbands?

Prior military experience of some of the parents of the Forgotten Six may have assisted in understanding wartime losses. Of the nine parents who were available at

<sup>12</sup> The birth mothers of Fisher and Gillespie predeceased their sons and nobody knew the whereabouts of Parker's mother at the time of his loss.

<sup>13</sup> As an example of an antagonistic relationship, Gillespie's elder sister, Christine Gillespie recalled, 'It was only when we were adults that Paul [a younger brother of John Gillespie] had anything to say to me about John. He had no positive memories of their relationship, in fact, on one occasion he recalled his fear of the macho attitudes and behaviour of John and his mates and was in no doubt as to their hostility to gays'. C. Gillespie, 'Responses to questions raised by J. Bourke in relation to the Gillespie family', [e-mail to J. Bourke], 25 Apr. 2011, Melbourne, Vic. This is not 'attachment'.

<sup>14</sup> The relationships between the men and their new wives were a manifestation of 'young love', with all of its attendant emotions. The different nature of the widows' relationships, counter balanced by the relatively short period of matrimony is noted. Gillson's widow was only 18 years of age when her husband was killed.

the time of the losses, five served during the Second World War including Les Gillson, William Fisher, Joan Herbert, John Herbert and Syd Carver.<sup>15</sup>

Individuals who were involved in the four incidents where the six men were lost or individuals who experienced close associations with them in Vietnam or elsewhere, form a cohort with characteristics distinct from those of Vietnam veterans in general. The cohort considered herein included two National Servicemen. The nature of bonding between the comrades and the decedents was different to the bonding experienced by family members. Comrades bonded because of shared experiences, which sometimes involved close encounters with opposing forces and the possibility of death. Furthermore, socialising and in some instances, a sense of responsibility toward the men contributed to this bonding. The relevant attributes of the men's comrades included their ages at the time of the loss, the periods over which they had known the decedents, their religiosity and their level of involvement in the loss incidents.

The comrades' average age at the time of the loss incidents was 23 years 4 months.<sup>16</sup> Most comrades had known the decedents for relatively short periods, just less than 17 months on the average, and this provides a basic indication of the extent of bonding.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, it is difficult to compare the comrades' level of bonding to that of family members and, without intending to deprecate the former this study suggests familial bonds were generally more intense.<sup>18</sup>

Data regarding the religiosity of 18 comrades of the men showed 72% were Christians, with 39% rated as 'Religious' or 'Very Religious' and 33% as 'Non Practising'. Twenty-eight per cent either declared themselves Agnostics, Atheists or had Other Convictions.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Appendix A contains details of military service rendered by the men's parents.

<sup>16</sup> All bar one of the men's comrades or associates were less than 30 years of age at the time of the related incident. Seventy-five per cent were under 25 years of age.

<sup>17</sup> Bill Denny, a friend of the Herbert family, is an exception because he had contact with the Herbert family in the five years before the loss incident. However, this relationship was superficial. If we excluded Denny from the calculation of the average time during which comrades knew the decedents, the average period of association reduces to just over 14 months. Denny served with 86 Transport Platoon in Vietnam from 29 Jan. 1971 to 9 Mar. 1972.

<sup>18</sup> The comrades, often referred to as the 'wider family', may sympathise with and provide support to the family members; however, due caution should be exercised when considering their respective grieving experiences. As romantic as the notion of this 'wider family' may be, it is a dubious venture to elevate the grief of those in the 'wider family' to a position equivalent to that of family members.

<sup>19</sup> Appendix A contains details regarding the religiosity of the men's comrades.

Eight of the men's comrades considered in this study were directly involved in one of the loss incidents. Because of the nature of the Herbert and Carver incident, none of their comrades was directly involved, other than in the post-combat searches.

## **EXTERNAL FACTORS**

A number of external factors influenced the members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades as they managed 'living with the un-dead'. Such factors included, the need to engage with other life events; reportage in the various media; and, historical investigations and searching.

### **'There's only so much you can do'**

The family members and comrades had lives to lead and interacted with others on a range of issues not directly related to the missing men.<sup>20</sup> For instance, Susanna Carver, Robert Carver's sister-in-law described family life after her ailing husband, Bill became redundant in 1998:

His mum died, his dad died and ... Aunty Kit died ... his whole family died all around him and he was the only one left and ... all this time ... I was looking after mum and dad Carver, aunty Kit and I had Bill. ... There's only so much you can do.<sup>21</sup>

Mrs Carver did not have time to consider her missing brother-in-law's case.

At the time of the respective losses, from within the men's birth families and their conjugal families, six families had pre-adolescent or adolescent children to support. These families dealt with the practicalities of everyday life, such as putting bread on the table. Similarly, when they were no longer living at home the men's siblings needed to earn a living.

The opportunity to 'get on with life' was more accessible to some. The comrades, with an average age of just over 23 years, had their lives ahead of them. For example, Paul Saxton, a comrade of Fisher recalled how he 'continued' his life after leaving the Army:

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<sup>20</sup> Most survivors married or were divorced and remarried; some had children; a number faced serious illnesses; all dealt with the deaths of family members, comrades and friends; many developed new social interests; many attended to their careers; and, the bread winners went about earning a living.

<sup>21</sup> S. Carver, 'Having a brother-in-law (Robert Carver) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], 20 May 2010, Melbourne, Vic.

The day I got discharged [from the Army] ... I drove straight from the discharge personnel depot to secondary teachers college and then I was full on into that for three years.<sup>22</sup>

Similarly, the three widows had their lives ahead of them.

**'Do you not realise ... we desire every bit of news we can get'**

Over the years, the reliability and credibility of the media reports relating to the six MIAs varied considerably and added to the ambiguity surrounding the men's fate. In 1973, a journalist reported only four Australian MIAs remained in Vietnam.<sup>23</sup> Sensationalist reporting often caused distress to family members.<sup>24</sup> In 1973, the *Sydney Morning Herald* revealed an American, who had been a POW in Hanoi reported he met two Australian pilots, McBride and Hume, who the Vietnamese were also holding POW.<sup>25</sup> After reading this article, Joan Herbert, Michael Herbert's mother, wrote to the Department of Air castigating the Government for not advising the family of this news:

Do you not realise that we desire every bit of news we can get. We consider this news shows every sign of hope, and we are taking it the way it reads—i.e., very positively.<sup>26</sup>

The RAAF families' hopes were raised in 1984 by a claim by an American Vietnam veteran, Jim Hayes that he and his associates had located a Canberra Bomber on the 4 November 1970, in the area somewhere between Phu Loc and Da Nang.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> P. Saxton, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally David Fisher)', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], 1 Nov. 2010, Floreat, WA. Saxton served in Vietnam with the 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Reinforcement Unit and 3 SAS Squadron from 30 July 1969 to 18 Feb. 1970.

<sup>23</sup> In 1973, the *Advertiser* (Adelaide) claimed: 'The two pilots are among four Australian servicemen who have not been accounted for in Vietnam. The other two are soldiers from New South Wales'. Anon., 'Missing pilot's family says Govt not helping', *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 30 Apr. 1973, p. 8. Actually, as of 17 Apr. 1971 there were six Australians in Vietnam whose bodies had not been recovered. Perhaps the article was referring to the four men classified as 'MIA'.

<sup>24</sup> Anon., 'Missing pilot's family upset', *Sun* (Melbourne), 30 Apr. 1973, p. 20; P. Haran, 'Vietnam bomber mystery: Wall of fire blasted Aussie plane', *Sunday Mail* (Adelaide), 13–14 May 1984, pp. 4–5; P. Haran, 'God comforted me: Mother: Thirteen years of anguish', *Sunday Mail* (Adelaide), 13 May 1984, p. 5; and, P. Haran, '"Vital" to parents', *Sunday Mail* (Adelaide), 13 May 1984, p. 4.

<sup>25</sup> Anon., 'RAAF disclaims captives in Hanoi', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 Apr. 1973, p. 10.

<sup>26</sup> J. P. Herbert, 'Request regarding Government intentions to follow up on a POW report', [letter to the Department of Air], 21 Apr. 1973, North Glenelg, SA, as contained in NAA: A703, 660/7/44310 Part 1.

<sup>27</sup> Haran, 'Vietnam bomber mystery: Wall of fire blasted Aussie plane'; Haran, 'God comforted me: Mother: Thirteen years of anguish', p. 5; and, Haran, '"Vital" to parents'. Haran subsequently confirmed the story he had written concerning Hayes was a complete fabrication on the part of Hayes. J. Bourke, 'Information provided by Jim Hayes regarding the possible

(Continued)

Furthermore, the media contributed to the confusion regarding the casualty classifications, often using the unfortunate appellation of 'missing'. In particular, the misunderstanding of Gillespie's classification persisted for many years. Gillespie's daughter, Fiona, always believed her father was missing: 'Harder to bear was ... that because Dad was classified as MIA he couldn't be given a funeral and had no grave'.<sup>28</sup>

With the Forgotten Six, *Historical Investigations and Searching* first appeared in 1984 and persisted through to 2009, when the ADF recovered the last two men. Historical investigation and searching activities have a number of features that enable their evaluation. These features include the motivation behind investigations, preparatory activities, execution of the investigations and their outcomes, including any impact on family members and comrades.<sup>29</sup>

As noted, in 1984 the Australian Government despatched a Mission to Vietnam 'to provide the fullest possible accounting of the last known circumstances' of the six men.<sup>30</sup> In the early 1980s the US were keen to gain access to Vietnam to search for their MIA personnel and this in part motivated the Australian Government to launch the 1984 Mission.<sup>31</sup> Herbert's mother, by her persistent and prolific letter writing to those in power also may have contributed to the Government's motivation.<sup>32</sup>

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crash site of a Canberra Bomber in Vietnam', [record of a telephone conversation with Peter Haran, Journalist], 21 Jan. 2004, Wantirna South, Vic., 2004.

<sup>28</sup> J. Cullen, 'Peace at last', *Take 5 Magazine*, Issue of 23 Apr. 2008, p. 12. Appendix D provides further details concerning the confusion around the casualty classification of Gillespie.

<sup>29</sup> Preparatory activities include archival research, prior liaison with the host country, and the availability of background briefings on the loss incident by host country officials. Access to the loss incident area and allowing adequate time for on-site investigation are critical factors during the execution of any searches. The involvement of witnesses from the opposing force and Australian witnesses, specifically individuals with first hand knowledge of the loss incident has the potential to enhance investigations.

<sup>30</sup> J. S. Holloway et alia, 'Report of the Mission of Investigation into Cases of Australian Servicemen Believed Killed in Action in Vietnam whose Bodies have not been Recovered: 9–23 May 1984', Canberra, ACT, 1984, p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> B. Hayden, 'Missing Australian servicemen', [letter to Nguyen Co Thach, SRV Foreign Affairs Minister], 17 Mar. 1984, Canberra, ACT, as contained in NAA: A1838, 3020/10/1/3 Part 1. This letter from the Australian Foreign Affairs Minister to his Vietnamese counterpart in Mar. 1984 made reference the American's desire to pursue the matter of their unaccounted-for personnel.

<sup>32</sup> A. Ekins, 'Australian MIAs of the Vietnam War—"missing in action" or "no known grave"?', *Wartime, Official Magazine of the Australian War Memorial*, Issue No. 23, AWM, Canberra, ACT, <<http://www.awm.gov.au/wartime/23/no-known-grave/>>, accessed 15 Mar. 2012.

The Mission 'was optimistic enough to consider they may even be given some remains during their visit' and 'asked if it might be possible to obtain identification assistance from the US'.<sup>33</sup> Despite this initial optimism, the Mission concluded:

- a) further details of Australian servicemen [sic] believed killed ... were not available
- b) there is no point in initiating further investigation of the circumstances surrounding the disappearance of [the men] ... although the Australian Government should react to the receipt of any further information on the subject
- c) the question of missing Australian servicemen [sic] should not be an issue in the bilateral relationship between Australia and Vietnam.<sup>34</sup>

Preparatory activities by the Mission were generally adequate; however, there were deficiencies in its execution. First, Vietnamese witnesses with first hand knowledge of the loss incidents were rarely sourced.<sup>35</sup> Second, access to the loss incident sites in the cases of Herbert and Carver, and Gillespie was limited but access was available to the sites related to Parker and Gillson, and Fisher. In addition, the 17-day Mission restricted its visits to the field to only three-and-a-half days, with only one-and-a-half on the actual loss incident sites. Third, the Mission precluded the participation of Australian witnesses and they may have been useful, at least with the Parker and Gillson cases.<sup>36</sup>

The Mission had minimal impact on the families. For example, Shane Herbert, Michael Herbert's brother recalled, 'we had thought that [the Government Mission of 1984] would answer a lot of questions. It turned out to be anything but that'.<sup>37</sup> It would take more than two decades before searchers recovered the men.

One of the mission's outcomes was to give the authorities the opportunity to dismiss the need for further investigation on the basis they had already investigated the

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<sup>33</sup> JCRC Liaison Bangkok, 'Australian Casualty Resolution Group', [message of 071135Z May 1984 to Commander JCRC, Hawaii], Bangkok, Thailand, as contained in Library of Congress, 1991, Reel No. 364, Document No. 071135Z May 84, pp. 303–4.

<sup>34</sup> Holloway et alia, 'Report of the Mission of Investigation into Cases of Australian Servicemen Believed Killed in Action in Vietnam whose Bodies have not been Recovered: 9–23 May 1984', p. 4.

<sup>35</sup> Nguyen Van Bao, the Company Commander of C238 Company, the force that opposed A company 1 RAR in 1965 when Parker and Gillson were killed, was still alive and living near Bien Hoa. It is not beyond the realms of possibility that Bao could have been located in 1984.

<sup>36</sup> Several key members of A Company 1 RAR from 1965–66, including the Company Commander, John Healy (1935–1994), were still alive and may have been available to assist.

<sup>37</sup> S. Herbert, 'Having a brother (Michael Herbert) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], 29 Oct. 2010, Glenelg North, SA.

cases. Even after Australia and Vietnam began their program of cooperation on defence policy and regional security in 1999, Australian authorities did not revisit the MIA issue.<sup>38</sup>

A number of individuals carried out private searches, or at least attempted to visit the loss incident sites.<sup>39</sup> For instance, Jack Thurgar, who served in Vietnam with SAS, although not with Fisher, went back to Vietnam in 1987 and 1989 to investigate the Fisher case.<sup>40</sup> In 1992, Albie Cunningham carried out in-country investigations into the Fisher case.<sup>41</sup> Ken Baker and Colin Butterworth, comrades of Parker and Gillson, attempted to visit the Parker and Gillson loss site in 1997.<sup>42</sup>

Hence, there was a range of external factors that influenced the members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades, but they had little or no control in these matters.

## ***ACTIONS/INTERACTIONS OF THE FAMILY MEMBERS AND COMRADES OF THE FORGOTTEN SIX***

Members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades engaged in various activities to manage 'living with the un-dead' with one simple objective in mind—to get on with their lives as best they could. What follows is an examination of the key actions/interactions of family members and comrades, from the time the men were lost until 2001.

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<sup>38</sup> Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in Australia, 'Vietnam–Australia Relations', Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in Australia, Canberra, ACT, <<http://www.vietnamembassy.org.au/Relations.htm>>, accessed 26 Aug. 2011.

<sup>39</sup> Not all private ventures were as purposeful as the Government Mission of 1984 and in some instances, they could even be described as 'pilgrimages'.

<sup>40</sup> Thurgar recalled that in 'about 1987 and 89' he 'went back to Vietnam ... and was thrown out of the country or was asked to leave the country two times when [he] went up into the area looking for David Fisher'. J. Thurgar, 'The recovery of Australian MIAs from Vietnam', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], 10 May 2011, Coolangatta, Qld. Thurgar served in Vietnam with 1 SAS Squadron from 18 Feb. to 29 Oct. 1970.

<sup>41</sup> A. Cunningham, 'Search for the remains of Pte Fisher: Vietnam November 1992 (Confidential)', Keysborough, Vic., 1992. Cunningham's relationship to any of the men was not established.

<sup>42</sup> C. W. Butterworth, 'Vietnam revisited—1997', *The 'First' Post: The Journal of the Associations of the First Infantry Battalions*, Vol. 33, Issue No. 1, 1998, pp. 35–40; and, C. W. Butterworth, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Richard Parker and Peter Gillson)', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], 13 Jan. 2011, Tyabb, Vic. Baker and Butterworth were not able to reach the reported loss incident site, but visited an area slightly less than three kilometres away, roughly west of the actual burial sites. Baker and Butterworth served in Vietnam with 1 RAR from 26 Nov. 1965 to 5 June 1966 and from 3 June 1965 to 5 June 1966 respectively.

The casualty notifications initially triggered a range of short-term actions by family members.<sup>43</sup> Family structures, their levels of cohesion and their geographical dispersion affected these interactions. Interactions took place between the parents, where both are available; between each available parent and any child; and, between any available children. Table 4–5 summarises the structures of the men's birth families at the time of their respective loss in terms of the availability of parents, the presence of children and the families' residential locations.<sup>44</sup>

There were limited opportunities for interactions within Parker's birth family because of the fragmented family structure. At the time of the loss incident, Parker's sister, Pat Woodland did not know the whereabouts of her mother, or if her mother was still living. Although Parker and Woodland's natural father, Harold Heath was alive at the time, and Woodland knew his whereabouts, Heath died in July 1966 not knowing his son was missing.<sup>45</sup> Gillespie's mother died in 1965 and Gillespie's family, with Frank Gillespie as a sole parent, lacked cohesion.<sup>46</sup> Hence, even before the men's loss, the birth families of Parker and Gillespie were fragmented. In contrast, around the time of the losses the families of Gillson, Fisher, Herbert and Carver were cohesive. However, the level of cohesion in the Herbert family deteriorated markedly in the late 1970s because of the stress caused by the loss and non-recovery of Michael Herbert. Shane Herbert, Michael Herbert's brother recalled as early as 1972, 'the close knit of the family was becoming very much unravelled'.<sup>47</sup> Michael Herbert's father, John Herbert and his wife, Joan separated around 1979.<sup>48</sup> On the other hand, Syd and Edna Carver,

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<sup>43</sup> 'Short-term' refers to the period within two years of the respective loss.

<sup>44</sup> D. H. Olson et alia, *Families: What Makes Them Work*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Newbury Park, CA, Sage Publications, 1989, pp. 8–9. Olson's work usefully informs a number of areas considered in this study. First, Olson's model hinges largely on children being an integral part of the family. Second, the study by Olson revealed a steady decline in the effective functioning of families under stress and this trend persisted until after children had married and departed the family home.

<sup>45</sup> The stepfather of Pat Woodland and Richard Parker (1948–51), Eugene Brew died in 1961.

<sup>46</sup> Frank Gillespie, Gillespie's father had difficulty in managing his teenage sons. The mother had been 'the backbone of the family'. C. Hendrie, 'Having a husband (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], 30 Aug. 2010, Cranbourne West, Vic.

<sup>47</sup> Shane Herbert recalled, 'My sister [Kerryn] ... was quite unsettled here [in the family home in Adelaide] so she was looking at moving on. The relationship between her and Mum [Joan Herbert] was poor'. S. Herbert, 'Having a brother (Michael Herbert) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'.

<sup>48</sup> John Herbert said, 'Joan and I ... separated some four-and-a-half years ago [1979] ... [Did Michael's disappearance affect that?] Oh yes that was the main reason why we ... weren't ever happily married after that ... because there was always so much tension you know everyday that's all Joan lived for. ... Yes we were not happy, the pair of us because we were terribly tense



the parents of Robert Carver were amicable and supportive of one another. In 1984 Syd Carver said, "Mum and I live alone here and we often spend the days wondering what ever happened to Rob".<sup>49</sup>

**Table 4–5: Structures of the Men's Birth Families at the time of their Loss**

FAMILY LIFE CYCLE	AVAILABILITY OF PARENTS AND LOCATIONS OF PRINCIPAL RESIDENCES (THE AGES OF INDIVIDUALS ARE SHOWN IN BRACKETS)	
	BOTH	ONE
Pre-Adolescent Children	Fisher's birth family, with his father, William (54) and his stepmother, Margaret (41)—Balgowlah Heights, NSW <sup>50</sup>	
Adolescent Children	Gillson's birth family, with his father Les (53) and his mother, Joyce (46)—Brunswick, Vic.; Fisher's birth family as described above; and, Herbert's family with his father, John (47) and his mother, Joan (50)—Glenelg North, SA	Gillespie's birth family with the father Francis (56)—Carnegie, Vic.
Children who have been Launched	Carver's birth family, with his father, Syd (60) and his mother Edna (59)—Toowoomba, Qld	Parker's Birth Family, with the father, Harold Heath—Willoughby, NSW and Parker's sister, Pat Woodland (31), who had been married for 11 years—Batlow, NSW

When Parker was lost in 1965, his conjugal family consisted only of his widow, Wendy Mudford, aged 24 who was living with her parents in Napier, NZ. When Gillson died in 1965, living in Fairfield Heights, New South Wales were his 18-year old widow, Lorraine Easton and four-month-old son, Robert. Easton's parents lived in nearby Liverpool, New South Wales. In 1971 when Gillespie died, his conjugal family consisted of his widow, Carmel Hendrie, aged 22 and the couple's daughter, Fiona aged just over two years. They lived in Riverstone, New South Wales but the widow's parents resided in Melbourne. Hence, the conjugal families of Parker, Gillson and Gillespie were not

and terribly terribly upsetting at times. ... I see the family everyday and care and love 'em just as much as I did previously'. H. Piper, 'MIA: Missing-in-Action', John Herbert, 25 min.

<sup>49</sup> Haran, "'Vital' to parents", p. 4.

<sup>50</sup> The exact dates of the birth of Fisher's half-sister and stepsister are not known; however, the younger of the two, the half-sister, was probably within a year of adolescence in 1969.

collocated with men's birth families and furthermore, Gillespie's widow was living apart from her birth family.

At the time of delivery of the casualty notifications, family members, mainly the NOK necessarily interacted with the authorities. In 1965, Australia had a far better system for delivering casualty notifications than the Americans. The Australian system required that a commissioned officer, generally accompanied by a chaplain, was to deliver the casualty notification in person.<sup>51</sup> The American system in late 1965 was 'Western Union simply handed the telegrams [notifying the casualty] to Yellow Cab drivers to deliver'.<sup>52</sup>

The relevant authorities passed the casualty notifications to the NOK of Fisher, Herbert, Carver and Gillespie in accordance with the existing policy and conveyed the casualty classification faithfully.<sup>53</sup> However, the information the local authorities passed to Gillson's widow was not a faithful rendition of the information provided by the Australian HQ in Vietnam.<sup>54</sup> The circumstances surrounding the delivery of the notification to Parker's widow are not known.<sup>55</sup>

The authorities did not normally contact family members other than the NOK and these other parties heard news of the casualties through secondary sources. For instance, Parker's sister, who was not Parker's NOK, recalled:

Nobody gave me any news. ... One morning I was there with my son in the kitchen, I had the radio on, and it said that this Richard Parker was missing in Vietnam.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> The authorities generally delivered casualty notifications to the NOK between 6 am and 8 pm. NAA: A6913, 1. Normally the authorities took care to ensure the NOK were informed before the media was advised. The process of locating the NOK and delivering the casualty advice sometimes took as long as three days, but was generally achieved within 24 hours, especially later in the War.

<sup>52</sup> Moore and Galloway, *We were Soldiers Once . . . and Young: Ia Drang—The Battle that Changed the War in Vietnam*, p. 323.

<sup>53</sup> Appendix D provides details of the release of information to the public concerning the six men and their casualty classifications.

<sup>54</sup> The chaplain who arrived shortly after the responsible officer delivered the news to Gillson's widow tried to convince her that her husband was 'only missing, they will find him'. R. Shambrook, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Peter Gillson)', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], 14 July 2010, Enoggera, Qld.

<sup>55</sup> The delivery of the casualty notification to Parker's widow would have been affected through diplomatic channels, because the widow was living in New Zealand at the time.

<sup>56</sup> P. Woodland, 'Having a brother (Richard Parker) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], 21 Mar. 2010, Batlow, NSW.

### **'No, this is not happening don't tell me'**

The NOK's level of acceptance of the status of the casualties varied over time, between and within cases. For instance, Lorraine Easton initially believed Gillson was 'missing'.<sup>57</sup> The issuing of a Death Certificate to Easton in early 1966 redressed this confusion. Carmel Hendrie did not want to entertain the idea her husband was dead, saying, 'No, this is not happening don't tell me, I don't want to know'.<sup>58</sup> Army sent a Death Certificate to Hendrie in May 1971; however, confusion about Gillespie's classification persisted, mainly because of frequent use of the generic term 'missing', by the media and others, including Defence.<sup>59</sup>

In the case of two of the married men, Gillson and Gillespie, the members of the decedent's birth family, the men's widows and members of the widows' families had the opportunity to interact with one another. However, in Parker's case the only surviving member of his birth family aware of the loss, Parker's sister, did not have contact with Parker's widow, Wendy Mudford until 2002. Nevertheless, Parker's widow enjoyed the support of her family in New Zealand, including the support of her friends and her new husband after 1984. The birth families of the widows of Gillson and Gillespie also provided support to their daughters.<sup>60</sup> On notification of the loss, Gillespie's widow acknowledged her husband's familial relationships:

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<sup>57</sup> Easton recalled, 'So I'm thinking that he was in some prisoner of war camp, this is what I'm thinking'. Easton goes on to say, 'The next day my mum came over once she found out ... and it came over on the radio that there was [a] Peter Gillson missing in action, but the words were presumed dead, and that's the first time I heard that. I just went hysterical'. L. Easton, 'Having a husband (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], 20 Mar. 2010, Forest Hill, NSW.

<sup>58</sup> Hendrie, 'Having a husband (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>59</sup> In 1980 or thereabouts, after her mother explained the absence of her birth father to her, Gillespie's daughter, Fiona (Pike) thought there was a slim chance her father was still alive. It was another seven years before she accepted that he 'was never coming back alive'. Pike recalled, 'there was not a problem with that: that he was killed ... but they just had listed him as missing'. F. Pike, 'Having a father (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], 28 Feb. 2011, Cranbourne West, Vic.

<sup>60</sup> Lorraine Easton, Gillson's widow recalled: 'Of course ... my parents spoil him [Robert Gillson Jr]; my eldest sister used to take him ... swimming or to the zoo because she's Robert's godmother'. Easton, 'Having a husband (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'. Robert Gillson Jr was born in July 1965.

[I] wanted to get back to ... Melbourne ... I went straight to the Gillespie family ... [I] didn't go and see mum and Dad first; they couldn't understand that I needed to be with the Gillespie family because it was their son.<sup>61</sup>

Gillespie's sister, Christine Gillespie recalled this period, 'Carmel [Gillespie's widow] became more a part of our family I think ... she spent time with us over that period when John was missing'.<sup>62</sup>

The widows of Gillson and Gillespie interacted with their former husbands' birth families extensively, even after they remarried.<sup>63</sup> Gillson's widow married John Hawes in June 1967, within two years of her husband's death, and Gillespie's widow began a new relationship in June 1971, two months after her husband died. Hendrie later recalled she 'didn't cope well' in the short-term partly because of family pressures, relating to her new relationship.<sup>64</sup> Hendrie did not re-marry until 2006, 35 years after her first husband's death.<sup>65</sup> The widows of Gillson and Gillespie had children with their new partners.<sup>66</sup> Parker's widow delayed re-marrying for 18 years, until early 1984 and she and her second husband did not have children of their own.

On the home front, family members were able to reflect on their losses and their measured responses helped them deal with their issues within the contemporaneous cultural and social milieu. The comrades' short-term reactions were vastly different: Vietnam was a very different world.

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<sup>61</sup> Hendrie, 'Having a husband (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>62</sup> C. Gillespie, 'Having a brother (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], 21 Feb. 2010, Kew, Vic.

<sup>63</sup> Robert Gillson Snr, Peter Gillson's elder brother recalled: 'Even when she [Peter Gillson's widow] ... remarried she was still connected 'cos they'd come down and ... visit us down in Melbourne and we'd go up there ... and visit her'. R. Gillson Snr, 'Having a brother (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], 22 Feb. 2010, Longwood, Vic.

<sup>64</sup> In the words of Gillespie's widow, 'I didn't cope very well ... withdrew into myself ... I just wasn't coping. ... This is back in the early stages where I was still a confused young woman with a young child'. Hendrie added she could not 'handle the pressures from the family, [who were] saying, it's too soon, it's too soon. You shouldn't be in a relationship, or anything'. Hendrie, 'Having a husband (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>65</sup> Gillespie's widow could have married without financial detriment at any time after 28 May 1984, when the legislation was changed.

<sup>66</sup> Gillson's widow and John Hawes had one son, Craig. After their marriage broke down and the couple divorced in Dec. 1986, Craig Hawes remained with his mother and the other son, Robert Gillson Jr, the son of Peter Gillson left the 'family' home. Robert would have been 20 at that stage and Craig would have been 17, rising 18. Robert Gillson Jr had been known as 'Robert Hawes' up to the time his mother told him the story of the loss of his birth father. Gillespie's widow and her new partner had two sons.

Combatants need to manage their expenditure of emotional energy during combat operations carefully and indulging in inappropriate expenditure of such energies might prove costly. Gordon Peterson, a comrade of Parker recalled, 'I didn't ... dwell too much on it [the non-recovery of Parker's body] because you were worrying about ... staying alive today, not about what happened yesterday'.<sup>67</sup> This was not only an Army attitude. Greg Weekes, a comrade and friend of Robert Carver recalled:

When you're an aircraft pilot, you lose a lot of friends over the years ... and your moments of grief and recollection are usually just a matter of a day, and then life goes on .... You've actually got to put it behind you, otherwise it will affect your ability to operate an aircraft properly.<sup>68</sup>

Following the men's loss, survivors could do very little in a practical sense other than respond to the orders their superiors issued, although units generally conducted short memorial services for the missing men, offering some solace to the survivors.<sup>69</sup>

As might be expected, the men's loss adversely affected morale. For instance, Gavin O'Brien, a comrade of Gillespie noted, 'John's death was an enormous shaking up for all of us and ... there certainly was a drop in morale in the unit as a whole'.<sup>70</sup>

Regardless of the *system's* hegemony, the soldiery found a ways to express themselves and their reactions ranged from quietly assessing the situation to unruly behaviour. In some instances, the intensity of the concomitant emotions engendered some seemingly irrational acts. Trevor Hagan, a comrade of Parker fell foul of the law after the Parker and Gillson incident.<sup>71</sup> Some reactions bordered on insubordination.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> G. Peterson, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Richard Parker)', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], 16 Feb. 2010, Wheelers Hill, Vic. Peterson served in Vietnam with 1 RAR from 3 June 1965 to 5 June 1966, and with AATTV from 15 July to 28 Oct. 1971.

<sup>68</sup> G. Weekes, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Robert Carver)', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], 15 July 2010, Tallai, Qld. Weekes served in Vietnam with 2 Squadron RAAF from 25 Feb. 1970 to 18 Feb. 1971.

<sup>69</sup> Gillson Snr, 'Having a brother (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'; T. Hagan, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Richard Parker)', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], 13 July 2010, Aroona, Qld; G. O'Brien, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally John Gillespie)', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], 21 Aug. 2010, Gilmore, ACT; and, Weekes, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Robert Carver)'.

<sup>70</sup> O'Brien, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally John Gillespie)'. O'Brien served in Vietnam with the 8 Field Ambulance from 10 Nov. 1970 to 21 Oct. 1971.

<sup>71</sup> Hagan served in Vietnam with 1 RAR from 1 June 1965 to 11 June 1966. Corporal Hagan was reduced to the rank of Private in Mar. 1966 while in Vietnam, but regained his rank of

Hence, in Vietnam the combatants faced the necessity of getting on with their allotted tasks and generally had little time to express their grief or to mull over the men's loss. The prevailing Service culture determined the reactions of the comrades of the Forgotten Six.

The treatment of some of the men closely involved in the loss incidents was questionable. Robert Gillson Snr, Peter Gillson's older brother and a member of 1 RAR in 1965 provides a classic example of poor management. While taking a shower after the Battalion had returned to base on 9 November, Gillson learned his brother had been killed, a full 24 hours after the event.<sup>73</sup> Gillson later felt neglected by the Battalion.<sup>74</sup> Bob Stephens and Roy Zegers were among the crew of the Gillespie helicopter.<sup>75</sup> Because of the trauma associated with his involvement in this incident, Stephens 'was repatriated to Australia' in May 1971 and 'spent the next 12 weeks in the base psychiatric hospital, during which [time] he lost 7 kg'.<sup>76</sup> Zegers also suffered under the ubiquitous 'system'.<sup>77</sup> Thus, particularly in cases where individuals were closely involved in the loss incidents, the authorities treated the survivors with a lack of compassion and understanding.

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Corporal within seven months. NAA: B2458, 15254. He subsequently served in Vietnam with the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion Royal Australian Regiment from 17 Nov. 1969 to 12 Nov. 1970.

<sup>72</sup> As an example of reactions bordering on insubordination, Gavin O'Brien, a comrade of Gillespie recalled, '[the death of Gillespie] led to an incident where ... some of the guys, when curfew came, which would have been eleven o'clock, refused to leave the canteen and refused to close the bar and they called the Duty NCO. ... Ultimately the Military Police came down and really closed it up quite spectacularly'. O'Brien, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally John Gillespie)'.

<sup>73</sup> Gillson Snr, 'Having a brother (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'. Robert Gillson Snr served in Vietnam from 30 Oct. 1965 to 3 June 1966.

<sup>74</sup> Robert Gillson Snr recalled, 'I didn't really get to talk to anybody, nobody actually came up to me, apart from the little memorial service I didn't hear from Father Cudmore [the Battalion Padre] 'cos I was Church of England anyway and I wasn't religious'. Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Stephens served in Vietnam with 9 Squadron RAAF from 23 July 1970 to 5 May 1971 and Zegers served in the same unit from Feb. to Aug. 1971.

<sup>76</sup> B. Stephens, 'From warfare (1970–71) to welfare', *Newsletter of the Vietnam Veterans Federation ACT Branch*, Vietnam Veterans Federation ACT Branch Inc., <[www.vvfact.org.au/wp-filez/sallyman.pdf](http://www.vvfact.org.au/wp-filez/sallyman.pdf)>, accessed 8 Oct. 2010, p. 1; and, N. Wilson, 'War death lingers across the years', *Herald Sun* (Melbourne), 22 Dec. 2007, p. 75.

<sup>77</sup> Zegers recalled his treatment after the loss incident saying, 'There was no debrief of any kind whatsoever. So you're just massively sedated. Once the sedation's off, wore off ... that's when the nightmares start. ... It was three days I had off, so I went on a drinking binge to try and forget it'. R. Zegers, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally John Gillespie)', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], 11 May 2011, Summer Park, Qld.

In other cases, even where the individual was not directly involved in the loss, their experiences contributed to the degradation of their performance. Bill Host, a comrade of Gillespie recalled a Sergeant incorrectly informed him friendly forces recovered Gillespie's body, 'the Sergeant lied to me, and after that I wasn't a real good soldier'.<sup>78</sup> John Bird, a comrade of Herbert and Carver left the RAAF in 1972: 'I was kicked out, basically. I wasn't asked to re-engage'.<sup>79</sup>

Short-term reactions gradually rolled over into the long-term.<sup>80</sup> Ambiguity persisted and the uncertainty surrounding the men's fate and their continued psychological presence weighed heavily on some family members and influenced their actions/interactions.

The family structures changed appreciably over the years. Table 4–6 provides snapshots of the decedents' birth families at critical times such as in 1985, after the families had assimilated the results of the 1984 Government Mission to Vietnam; and in 2001, before OAH entered the field.<sup>81</sup>

Within the families, the level of interaction varied considerably.<sup>82</sup> The tone of these interactions varied from amicable and supportive to antagonistic, depending largely on the degree of convergence of the interacting parties' strategies and their relative power positions. For example in 1975, Michael Herbert's sister, Kerryn Herbert lived away from home, 'because of [the] mother's dominance and church'.<sup>83</sup> John Herbert, Michael Herbert's father liked a drink.<sup>84</sup> Interactions within the Herbert family were sometime antagonistic.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> B. Host, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally John Gillespie)', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], 16 July 2010, Myocum, NSW. Host served in Vietnam with 33 Dental Unit from 5 Nov. 1970 to 19 Aug. 1971.

<sup>79</sup> J. Bird, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Michael Herbert and Robert Carver)', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], 28 Oct. 2010, Aldinga Beach, SA. Bird served in Vietnam with 2 Squadron RAAF from 18 Feb. 1970 to 19 Feb. 1971.

<sup>80</sup> The 'long-term' is the period commencing two years after the respective loss incident.

<sup>81</sup> Both birth parents and stepparents are included among the 'parents' in Table 4–6.

<sup>82</sup> Initially, there was no interaction between Parker's widow and his sister, Pat Woodland—the one surviving member of Parker's birth family who was aware he had been lost. Insufficient data on the Fisher family restricts discussion regarding the level of interaction that took place.

<sup>83</sup> Air Officer South Australia, 'Report regarding the Herbert Family based on an interview with Joan Herbert conducted by Father O'Mera on 21 July', [letter to J. H. D. Blackwell], 23 July 1975, Edinburgh, SA, as contained in NAA: A703, 660/7/44310 Part 1.

<sup>84</sup> NAA: A12372, R/4904/H.

<sup>85</sup> Shane Herbert, the younger of the Herbert children recalled: 'In the early days [the early 1970s] after his [Michael Herbert's] disappearance, Dad would march on Anzac Day. ... He would typically have a skin-full and come home to a situation that was just—just horrific. Mum

(Continued)

**Table 4–6: Availability of Parents within the Birth Families**

AVAILABILITY OF PARENTS	YEAR AND STATUS OF THE FAMILIES	
	1985	2001
Both	Carver Herbert	Herbert
One	Fisher Gillson	Fisher
None	Parker Gillespie	Parker Gillson Carver Gillespie

The mothers of the children of Gillson and Gillespie did not acquaint their children with the details of their fathers until 10 to 12 years after the death events.<sup>86</sup> Robert Gillson Jr recalled after he became aware of his father's story around 1977, 'No-one spoke about him'.<sup>87</sup> However, open discussion of the losses progressively replaced this avoidance, as the family dynamics changed. Carmel Hendrie, Gillespie's widow noted around the early 1990s a degree of openness emerged among the Gillespie family members about the loss of her husband.<sup>88</sup>

From the time of the casualty notifications until the men's funerals (2007–09), family members also interacted with various extra-familial entities. In the main, the desire to understand the loss incidents and the need to source emotional and practical support drove these interactions.<sup>89</sup> Figure 4–1 maps the various external entities with which the families interacted.

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would go nuts. ... They were just shocking days'. Herbert, 'Having a brother (Michael Herbert) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'.

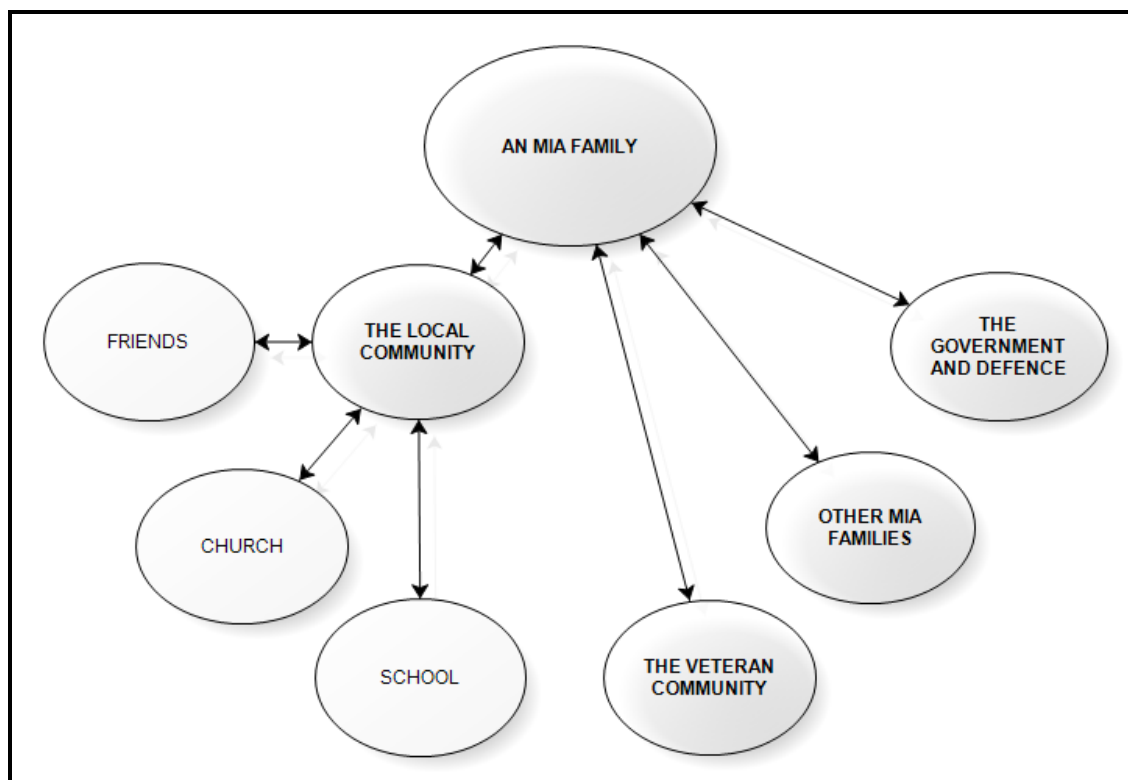
<sup>86</sup> Gillson's son was given details regarding the loss of his biological father around 1977, at the age of 12 or thereabouts. Gillespie's daughter was acquainted with the details regarding her father when she was '10 to 12', around 1980. Hence, these stories were shared with both children during their adolescent years.

<sup>87</sup> R. Gillson Jr, 'Having a father (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], 21 May 2011, Melton West, Vic.

<sup>88</sup> Hendrie recalled, 'It's probably been maybe in the last fifteen years [from around 1995] that they all came out and said how they felt'. Hendrie, 'Having a husband (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>89</sup> The interactions discussed in this section are primarily 'one to one' transactions related to the men's loss; however, any one individual may have the support of others and hence a degree of plurality emerges. Interactions may involve face-to-face meetings, letters and/or phone conversations.



**Figure 4–1: External Interactions of the Families while 'Living with the Un-dead'**

The support of friends was important to some family members. For example, Parker's widow, Wendy Mudford had the support of two close friends, Cicely Ellis and Jillene Olsen, who came to Australia on a working holiday in the 1960s with Mudford. They all met Richard Heath (AKA Parker). Parker 'was groomsman at ... [Cicely's] wedding and gave away Jillene Olsen at hers'.<sup>90</sup> Friends were also important to some Gillespie family members.<sup>91</sup>

### **'I've placed it all in God's hands'**

Some members of the families of the Forgotten Six drew support from their Church. For example, Christine Gillespie, Gillespie's elder sister remembers the support from the local community and Church: 'It was about people being present and people coming and spending time, that was big, all different people, priests and nuns and the whole

<sup>90</sup> D. McLennan, 'At last, family and friends farewell lost mate', *Canberra Times*, 13 June 2007, p. 3.

<sup>91</sup> Carmel Hendrie, Gillespie's widow recalled the family received support from John's friends, from before he joined the Army, 'they were marvellous ... they were brilliant and their wives, or girlfriends'. Hendrie, 'Having a husband (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

Catholic thing too'.<sup>92</sup> Joan Herbert, Michael Herbert's mother interacted intensely with her local Church and drew strength from her religion.<sup>93</sup> In May 1984, Joan Herbert declared, 'I've placed it all [the loss of her son] in God's hands'.<sup>94</sup>

Prior to 2002, various community organisations undertook a number of commemorative activities in the cases of Fisher and Carver, the case of Fisher being a quintessential example. Since 1970, the Mosman Rugby Club honoured Fisher, 'a treasured and fallen friend and player' by presenting the Dave Fisher Memorial Trophy each year to a young player who exhibits outstanding courage, willingness and fellowship.<sup>95</sup> A plaque, dedicated on 28 July 1995 still hangs on the wall of the southern end of the Big School Room at Sydney Grammar School, carrying the name of David Fisher (Old School 1962).<sup>96</sup> The inscription on the plaque reads, 'Μνήμης χάριν': 'For the sake of Memory'.<sup>97</sup> Carver's former secondary school, Harristown High School, established a small indoor memorial in his memory, in the form of a cabinet displaying his memorabilia.<sup>98</sup> These pastoral style commemorations only emerged where the families were integral to the community.<sup>99</sup>

As usual, Legacy stepped forward to assist the widows.<sup>100</sup> A generous Government granted the three widows a War Widow's Pension, but Easton and

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<sup>92</sup> Gillespie, 'Having a brother (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>93</sup> Twenty-seven months after her son was lost, when interviewed by a reporter from the *Sunday Telegraph* (Sydney), Mrs Herbert said, "Please ask your readers to pray". Staff Reporters, 'Hopes kept alive for 2 airmen lost in Vietnam', *Sunday Telegraph* (Sydney), 4 Feb. 1973, p. 9.

<sup>94</sup> Haran, 'God comforted me: Mother: Thirteen years of anguish'.

<sup>95</sup> Anon., 'Vale, dear friend', *Mosman & Lower North Shore Daily*, 23 Oct. 2008, pp. 1,4.

<sup>96</sup> Anon., 'Dedication of a memorial plaque to David Fisher, David Brian and Trevor Lyddieth on 28 July', *Grammar Foundations: Newsletter of the Sydney Grammar School*, Issue No. 14, 1995, p. 21.

<sup>97</sup> Translation provided by Dr A. D. Stevens, Head of Classics, Sydney Grammar School.

<sup>98</sup> Carver, 'Having a brother-in-law (Robert Carver) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'.

<sup>99</sup> Over the years, the Fisher, Herbert and Carver's families established themselves in their local communities, more so than the other three men's families. Appendix A elaborates on this issue.

<sup>100</sup> Legacy helped Gillson's widow, Lorraine Easton once her son, Robert Gillson went to high School. Easton, 'Having a husband (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'. Carmel Hendrie, Gillespie's widow recalled, 'I can say Legacy were very good: they came out, ... helped fill out forms, and tried to get the pension going—whatever they had to do'. Hendrie, 'Having a husband (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

Mudford lost their entitlements when they remarried—in 1967 and early 1984 respectively.<sup>101</sup>

Contact between the six MIA families and the veteran community was initially limited; however, some veterans made efforts to support the families. A number of the men's comrades wrote condolence letters from Vietnam. For example, Trevor Hagan established himself as a 'minder' for Parker's widow.<sup>102</sup> However, not all families enjoyed on-going contact. Clive Williams wrote to Gillson's widow in November 1965, after the loss of Gillson and the widow replied.<sup>103</sup> However, she did not have any subsequent contact with her husband's comrades.<sup>104</sup> Williams confirms he did not communicate with Gillson's widow after his return to Australia.<sup>105</sup> In some cases, the men's comrades found it difficult to make contact, even by writing.<sup>106</sup>

On return to Australia, some veterans, especially those with first hand knowledge of the loss incidents felt an obligation to call on the men's families. The families were thirsty for knowledge. For example, Greg Weekes recalled:

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<sup>101</sup> The Government subsequently rescinded the iniquitous provision that enabled the cancellation of these pensions, effective from 28 May 1984. Widows remarrying after that date continued to receive the War Widow's Pension but those who had lost their pension did not have it reinstated. It took until 2002 for the legislation to be changed to have the pensions of 'pre 1984 remarried' widows reinstated. War Widows' Guild of Australia, 'The War Widows' Pension', War Widows' Guild of Australia, Parkes, ACT, <[http://www.warwidows.org.au/?page\\_id=9](http://www.warwidows.org.au/?page_id=9)>, accessed 23 Feb. 2010. Gillson's widow recalled that in 2004 it was only by accident, looking through 'junk mail', that she found out about the possibility of having her pension reinstated. Easton, 'Having a husband (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'. Naturally, the Government made no retrospective payments to the widows.

<sup>102</sup> Hagan recalled, 'I ... wrote to her [Parker's widow] on the 11 November 65. I ... told her what happened to Tiny and everything and ... after that, sort of monthly, once I got her phone number and she had mine, we've religiously rung each other every month'. Hagan, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Richard Parker)'.

<sup>103</sup> Breen, *First to Fight*, p. 123. Williams served in Vietnam with 1 RAR from 3 June 1965 to 28 May 1966.

<sup>104</sup> Easton, 'Having a husband (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

<sup>105</sup> C. Williams, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Peter Gillson)', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], 18 Mar. 2010, Canberra, ACT.

<sup>106</sup> For example, Roy Zegers, a comrade of Gillespie received a letter from Gillespie's parents within a few weeks of the loss but recalled 'I was hurting too much to tell them what had actually happened and in hindsight ... I wish I had told them something, not the truth, but something'. Zegers, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally John Gillespie)'.

When I came back from Vietnam I actually went and visited the Herbert family and the Carver family. ... They had all the questions in the world ... as to what I thought happened and I talked them through all the different scenarios.<sup>107</sup>

Barry Carpenter, a comrade of Herbert returned to Australia in late November 1970 and had a similar experience when he visited the Herbert family a few days later.<sup>108</sup> Shane Herbert, Michael Herbert's brother remembered some initial contact from some of his brother's associates but added, 'very little contact ... was maintained. I'm not saying that those people didn't care. I think they would have appreciated the situation'.<sup>109</sup>

Although contact between the veteran community and the six MIA families was initially subdued, the Welcome Home Parade in Sydney in October 1987 and the dedication of the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial in Canberra in October 1992 provided opportunities for some members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades to connect.

Approximately 30,000 Vietnam veterans participated in the Welcome Home Parade and some MIA family members attended. Robert Gillson Jr recalled Carey McQuillan of the 173<sup>rd</sup> Brigade Association contacted him, probably in the late 1980s, before the Welcome Home Parade.<sup>110</sup> Gillson noted he 'was given intensive support by that man [McQuillan]'. Gillson indicated McQuillan and his associates made him feel 'part of the Vietnam veterans' community'.<sup>111</sup> However, not all encounters between veterans and family members were comfortable. Fiona Pike, Gillespie's daughter recalled an encounter with the man in the 'purple hat' at the Welcome Home Parade:

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<sup>107</sup> Weekes, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Robert Carver)'.

<sup>108</sup> Carpenter recalled, 'It was an evening when I got down there: ... and I think Jack [John] Herbert opened the door. ... He virtually led me straight to this map on the coffee table, which was one of our tactical maps with the last known position [of the missing aircraft marked] on it. He'd obviously been apprised of a lot of possibilities, because he was talking about those and he was really looking for my opinion'. B. Carpenter, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Michael Herbert)', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], 30 Oct. 2010, Mile End, SA. Carpenter served in Vietnam with 2 Squadron RAAF from 19 Dec. 1969 to 27 Nov. 1970.

<sup>109</sup> S. Herbert, 'Renaming of the old King Street Bridge as the Michael Herbert Bridge in the City of Holdfast Bay', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], 17 Dec. 2011, Glenelg North, SA.

<sup>110</sup> 1 RAR had been part of the 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade in Vietnam in 1965–66 and Carey McQuillan had been instrumental in setting up the first Australian Chapter of the 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade Association. McQuillan served in Vietnam with 1 RAR from 7 June 1965 to 7 June 1966. McQuillan died six months before OAH discovered Parker and Gillson's remains.

<sup>111</sup> Gillson Jr, 'Having a father (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

I can ... remember one guy just looked at me—I can remember he had this purple hat on: he looked at me and it was like he just saw a ghost. He just disappeared. ... They said that he was one of the ones that really, really did not cope with that at all and that he'd been in and out of mental institutions.<sup>112</sup>

Representatives of at least four of the MIA families attended the dedication of the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial in Canberra in October 1992, and it was an emotionally charged event for all.<sup>113</sup> Shane and Kerryn Herbert met some of their brother's former associates during this activity and Shane Herbert recalled being 'overwhelmed with sadness'.<sup>114</sup> Carmel Hendrie recalled her first contact with members of 8 Field Ambulance, her former husband's unit from Vietnam, 'one guy just looked and walked away. He just couldn't come to grips to think that I was there. It was hard for them to be with me'.<sup>115</sup> Christine Gillespie felt her experiences during the dedication weekend represented 'the turning point ... in terms of support or offers of support from veterans'. Ms Gillespie 'began to think that in some ways ... recovery [of her brother] was more real and more urgent to veterans than ... to the family'.<sup>116</sup>

Some family members were still searching for information about their loved ones. *Frederick*, a comrade of Herbert remembered meeting Carver's parents:

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<sup>112</sup> Pike, 'Having a father (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>113</sup> The following family members attended the dedication of the Vietnam Memorial in Canberra in Oct. 1992: Robert Gillson Jr; Edna and Syd Carver, the parents of Robert Carver; Kerryn and Shane Herbert, the siblings of Michael Herbert; Carmel Hendrie, Gillespie's widow; Christine Gillespie, Gillespie's elder sister; and, Fiona Pike, Gillespie's daughter. (Other family members may also have attended.)

<sup>114</sup> Shane Herbert, Michael Herbert's brother recalled, 'it was an extremely emotional weekend. ... I saw the plaques for the first time and the stones for Michael and Robert [Carver]'. Herbert, 'Having a brother (Michael Herbert) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'. The plaques to which Herbert referred are the ones affixed to the ends of the three stone benches at the Memorial, commemorating the six MIAs.

<sup>115</sup> Hendrie, 'Having a husband (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>116</sup> The recollections of Gillespie's elder sister were 'everyone was very friendly and caring and extremely kind, extremely kind and I found that quite remarkable. It was an extraordinary weekend, extraordinary, one of the most amazing weekends of my life'. Ms Gillespie went on to say, 'One thing that occurred to me over that weekend was the extraordinary bonds among the veterans; ... the strength of connection among people was truly amazing'. Gillespie, 'Having a brother (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

I felt extreme empathy once I sat down with these two people, because they, they had lost their son; they were really lost as to what had happened to him; they were really trying to glean information.<sup>117</sup>

Some relationships between family members and the men's comrades stood the test of time. For example, the relationship between Hagan and Mudford still endures.<sup>118</sup> Carmel Hendrie described the relationships that developed after her family's encounters with her husband's former comrades in Canberra in October 1992:

[After 1992,] a few of them had touched base with Fiona, ... Bill Host in particular, ... he was in the Gold Coast; ... there [is] ... another guy in Canberra Fiona has kept in contact all these years ... and he still rings Fiona but no, not me.<sup>119</sup>

In the case of Fisher's family, members of the Special Air Service Regiment Association were 'heavily involved and had maintained constant contact with the family'.<sup>120</sup> Speaking in Hanoi in 2008 on the repatriation of Fisher, Warren Snowdon, as Minister for Defence Science and Personnel acknowledged the support given by the SAS Association to the Fisher family over the years.<sup>121</sup>

In America, the *National League of Families of Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia* created a community of mourning for American families and provided a strong lobby group, but no similar organisation existed in Australia. During the Vietnam War, the bereaved in Australia did not coalesce into communities of mourning as occurred to varying degrees during the two World Wars.<sup>122</sup> For example, in 1971 Joan

<sup>117</sup> Frederick, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], Aug. 2010, Canberra, ACT.

<sup>118</sup> Hagan reported, 'It wasn't until ... Christmas 2000, [after] Wendy and Don [Wendy Mudford's second husband] had been to Australia [and] ... saw us ... [that we] arranged to go over to them'. Hagan, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Richard Parker)'.

<sup>119</sup> Hendrie, 'Having a husband (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>120</sup> J. Thurgar, 'Repatriation of David Fisher and involvement with the Fisher family', [e-mail to J. Bourke], 23 Aug. 2012, Coolangatta, Qld.

<sup>121</sup> W. Snowdon, 'Speech at Ramp Ceremony in Hanoi on 9 October 2008 (Private David Fisher)', Department of Defence, Canberra, ACT, <<http://www.defence.gov.au/minister/76tpl.cfm?CurrentId=8298>>, accessed 16 Jan. 2013. Snowdon was Minister for Defence Science and Personnel from Dec. 2007 to June 2009 and subsequently from 14 Sept. 2010 to Sept. 2013 when Labor lost office. Snowdon was also Minister for Veterans' Affairs from 14 Sept. 2010 to Sept. 2013.

<sup>122</sup> The reasons why communities of mourning did not emerge in Australia during the Vietnam War revolved primarily around two issues. First, the scale of casualties in Vietnam, compared to those suffered during the two World Wars, was significantly lower. Second, recruiting and manning of units deployed to Vietnam was not regionally based, as sometimes happened in earlier wars.

Herbert believed only Herbert and Carver remained as MIA in Vietnam, her being unaware of the other four cases.<sup>123</sup> Some telephone contact took place between Joan Herbert and Edna Carver, Robert Carver's mother; however, this was emotionally unsettling for Mrs Carver.<sup>124</sup>

Over the years, the families necessarily interacted with the Government and Defence. Initially, these interactions were short lived, lasting only a matter of months, except for Joan Herbert who persisted with her letter writing for at least three years. Although the authorities investigated the loss incidents during the War, none of the family members interviewed in this study recalled having ever sighted these official reports. When the Government Mission went to Vietnam in 1984, a short period of interaction took place but this also quickly subsided. In 2001, there was a short burst of interaction between the authorities and the Carver and Herbert families when the authorities released erroneous information concerning the crash site of Herbert and Carver's aircraft, claiming that an Investigative Element from the US JTF-FA located the plane. The Defence Attaché at the Australian Embassy in Hanoi, Gary Hogan, cautioned that 'family members of [the] RAAF aircrew ... not be advised until some confirmatory action had taken place', but to no avail.<sup>125</sup> Subsequent investigations did not substantiate the Americans' report.<sup>126</sup>

The opportunities for the families to exercise agency were limited. For example, Army arranged a memorial service for John Gillespie in Melbourne on 27 April 1971, 10 days after his death. Christine Gillespie remembered the ceremony vividly:

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<sup>123</sup> J. P. Herbert, 'Request for advice regarding Government intentions to locate Michael Herbert and Robert Carver', [letter to Mr Fairbairn], 9 Nov. 1971, North Glenelg, SA, as contained in NAA: A703, 660/7/44310 Part 1. The extent to which other families appreciated the overall situation at that time has not been established.

<sup>124</sup> Susanna Carver, Robert Carver's sister-in-law recalled, 'Mrs Herbert was a very emotional lady, more so than mum and ... dad [Syd Carver] felt at one stage that ... Mrs Herbert wasn't good for mum, in that she was ... opening the wounds all over again. ... We just felt if mum had been left alone a little bit more she would ... [have] accepted it more'. Carver, 'Having a brother-in-law (Robert Carver) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'.

<sup>125</sup> G. Hogan, 'Alleged discovery of RAAF Canberra Bomber A84-231', [e-mail to RAAF HQ], 19 June 2001, Hanoi, Vietnam.

<sup>126</sup> As Shane Herbert, the brother of Michael Herbert recalled, 'it was an American plane but the RAAF had mistaken that for the possibility of [the aircraft being] Michael's plane and in fact got in touch with the family. ... There was a lot of inappropriate information given about the content of the plane and the state of the airmen at the time'. ... '[It] was very stressing for the family'. Herbert, 'Having a brother (Michael Herbert) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'.

In between us and the altar there was [sic] these soldiers and I felt furiously angry. ... I felt totally powerless. .... There was this sense that the Army owned the funeral.<sup>127</sup>

When asked if anybody actually lobbied for the investigation of his brother's case, Robert Gillson Snr, Peter Gillson's brother implied there would be no chance of influencing the situation: 'That's the Army. ... We just accepted what we were told at that stage ... and [I] just tried to get on with my life'.<sup>128</sup> When asked a similar question about the recovery of her husband, Gillespie's widow replied, 'No. I didn't know there was the process'.<sup>129</sup> Hence, family members generally felt they had little or no control even in day-to-day matters related to the missing men, let alone in the more important issue of having their cases investigated.

A number of communication breakdowns occurred between the authorities and the families. For instance, Lorraine Easton, Gillson's widow unsuccessfully endeavoured to contact Army 'a couple of times'. Easton recalled, 'You had to assume everything. You weren't told anything directly'.<sup>130</sup> Carmel Hendrie had similar experiences.<sup>131</sup> Joan Herbert sometimes interacted with the Government but acrimoniously, and in April 1973, Mrs Herbert wrote 'You people seem so cold and inhumane; you have no desire whatsoever to become personally involved'.<sup>132</sup> Furthermore, Mrs Herbert was not averse to employing the press to make her point.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Christine Gillespie later reflected, 'I thought later my father must have agreed to some sort of scenario ... he was suffering such grief he would have agreed to things very easily'. Gillespie, 'Having a brother (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>128</sup> Gillson Snr, 'Having a brother (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

<sup>129</sup> Hendrie, 'Having a husband (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>130</sup> Easton, 'Having a husband (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

<sup>131</sup> Hendrie candidly reported a breakdowns in communications with the Government: 'There's been a few instances through the years [where I] have been in touch with a few of the government people ... [and] not one of them ever ever got back to me. ... No I think it was pretty slack'. Hendrie, 'Having a husband (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>132</sup> Herbert, 'Request regarding Government intentions to follow up on a POW report'.

<sup>133</sup> In Apr. 1973, the *Sun* (Melbourne) reported, '[t]he parents [John and Joan Herbert] of a pilot [Michael Herbert] missing in Vietnam said yesterday they were shocked, humiliated by the treatment they received from Federal Government. They claimed the Australian Government had shown little interest in trying to establish the fate of servicemen missing in Vietnam. ... Mrs Herbert said a senior RAAF officer had visited them some weeks ago. "He wanted to know whether we were religious fanatics for burning a torch for Michael", she said'. Anon., 'Missing pilot's family upset', p. 20.



The fathers of Gillson, Fisher, Herbert and Carver, and Herbert's mother rendered service during the Second World War and these individuals might have displayed pro-service attitudes. However, in 1973, Joan Herbert indicated an attitude that was not pro-service, 'Never again would I encourage a son to join the Services'.<sup>134</sup> Nevertheless, in 1975 a local Catholic priest, Father O'Mera reported, 'She [Mrs Herbert] is pro-service and ... is not anti-Vietnam'.<sup>135</sup>

On their return to Australia, most of the men's comrades simply continued with their lives, sparing the occasional thought for the men left behind. However, many were not able to let go of their Vietnam experience completely, and a few even returned to Vietnam for a second tour. Against the stigmatising backdrop of the Vietnam War, the comrades interacted to varying degrees with one another, with their families and with their communities.

During their tours in Vietnam, most of the men's comrades were not married but they generally had significant others within their birth families.<sup>136</sup> Although some of these veterans interacted with their families regarding the men's loss, the role of these family members was minimal.

Regarding returning veterans' experiences with the general populace, 17 participating comrades offered comment and 11 reported experiencing negativity in various forms.<sup>137</sup> However, six individuals specifically reported they did not encounter any hostile reactions.<sup>138</sup> Thirteen veterans offered comments about their contact with

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<sup>134</sup> Herbert, 'Request regarding Government intentions to follow up on a POW report'.

<sup>135</sup> Air Officer South Australia, 'Report regarding the Herbert Family based on an interview with Joan Herbert conducted by Father O'Mera on 21 July', as contained in NAA: A703, 660/7/44310 Part 1.

<sup>136</sup> Only three of the 18 cases on whom data is available were married prior to embarking for Vietnam. With two of the comrades, their fathers passed away shortly before their sons' embarkations.

<sup>137</sup> Gregory Weekes, a comrade Carver recalled, 'I can remember the first time I went down the street in uniform in Brisbane and I was spat on'. Weekes, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Robert Carver)'. Neither of the two National Servicemen in this group of eleven respondents reported specific instances of negativity but rather, in the words of Gavin O'Brien, a comrade of Gillespie, 'the atmosphere, it was very anti. ... I tended to keep mum about the whole thing'. O'Brien, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally John Gillespie)'.

<sup>138</sup> The six men who reported they did not encounter any hostile reactions were long-term service members and were somewhat segregated from the normal civilian population. The average length of service of these six men was just over 19 years. Les Maher, who was involved in the Gillespie loss incident and who had considerable experience dealing with Vietnam veterans because of his work with the RSL, suggested National Servicemen received little support on discharge. 'They returned home from Vietnam ... and were immediately

the RSL around the time of the War. Four men decided not to make contact; the comments of another four reflected a negative experience; and, five reported favorable interactions.<sup>139</sup> However, some did not seek contact with other veterans or veterans' organisations. Robert Gillson Snr, Gavin O'Brien and Gordon Peterson were typical of veterans who did not mix with others.<sup>140</sup>

Seventeen veterans provided information about their vocational activities after their Vietnam experience. The two National Servicemen who participated in this study completed their two years of obligatory service and two Regular Servicemen were discharged because of medical conditions.<sup>141</sup> The other 13 served continuously for periods of 3, 6, 9 or 12 years or more.<sup>142</sup> On separation from the service, some undertook tertiary courses to prepare for gainful employment, while others, especially the aviators, used their previous skills to gain employment. Some entered the public service or gravitated to academia, while three started their own businesses. Two participating comrades experienced problems with stability of employment after their Vietnam service.<sup>143</sup>

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discharged and returned into the community unsupported, whereas a regular army person returned to his unit, or he returned with his unit, and they had full support ... their lives just went on as normal'. L. Maher, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally John Gillespie)', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], 26 Feb. 2010, Morwell, Vic. Maher served in Vietnam with AATTV from 14 Jan. to 25 Nov. 1971.

<sup>139</sup> John Bird, a comrade of Herbert and Carver noted these unfavourable interactions with the RSL revolved around the old catch cry, 'they said it was not a war, it was a police action'. Bird, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Michael Herbert and Robert Carver)'.

<sup>140</sup> Robert Gillson Snr left the Army in Feb. 1967 after three years service. Gillson recalled the period after his discharge: 'I sort of became a bit reclusive didn't ... socialize, didn't talk to many people at all, I still don't. ... I seem to talk just to the family'. Gillson Snr, 'Having a brother (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'. Gavin O'Brien recalled, 'Well, when I came back from Vietnam I guess like most of the vets I tended to go in, inwards'. O'Brien, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally John Gillespie)'. Gordon Peterson related, 'I didn't get involved with any veterans ... [until] about 1997. Up to that stage ... I'd been to dawn services a couple of years ... but no, I didn't join any ... organizations or anything like that'. Peterson, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Richard Parker)'.

<sup>141</sup> These two 'special' cases were Albert Thirkell, a comrade of Gillson and one of Gillespie's comrades, Bob Stephens. Thirkell was discharged after five years service as medically unfit, because of wounds received in Vietnam. Stephens was discharged from the RAAF in Dec. 1972 but subsequently re-enlisted in 1985 and served until 1993.

<sup>142</sup> These periods reflect the periods of engagement for other ranks, which were essentially two years for National Servicemen, and three and six years for non-commissioned members of the regular forces. Officers had no fixed period of engagement.

<sup>143</sup> John Bird, a comrade of Herbert and Carver, recalled, 'Full time work ... I had nineteen jobs from [1972] when I got out of the Air Force till ... 1989-90'. Bird, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Michael Herbert and Robert Carver)'. A comrade and

(Continued)

For many veterans the Welcome Home Parade in Sydney in 1987 and the dedication of the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial in Canberra in 1992 provided an opportunity for healing and reconciliation. Overwhelmingly, those who attended the Parade thought highly of the event. Les Maher, who was involved in the Gillespie loss incident, saw it as 'a celebration of everybody and it was a pretty uplifting sort of an event'.<sup>144</sup> Some felt the event provided them with a sense of closure regarding their Vietnam experience.

The dedication of the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial provided confirmation of the value of the veterans' Vietnam service. For instance, *George*, a comrade of Herbert recalled:

It was good that people finally acknowledged that we did something valuable and that's what I felt, that we were finally acknowledged that we had made some sort of contribution and that we were valued for that contribution.<sup>145</sup>

However, some were too busy getting on with their lives to bother with these commemorative activities.<sup>146</sup> Others were simply not interested. For instance, Bill Denny, a friend of the Herbert family recalls the Welcome Home Parade saying, 'Well ... I was a professional soldier ... [and] it didn't mean that much to me'.<sup>147</sup> Approximately 60,000 served with the Australian forces in Vietnam and if 30,000

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friend of John Gillespie, Bill Host also moved around: 'My employment record was always short, I couldn't stay in the one place that long you know and ... it was something that just rode with me all the time'. Host, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally John Gillespie)'.

<sup>144</sup> Maher, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally John Gillespie)'.

<sup>145</sup> *George*, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], July 2010, Brisbane, Qld.

<sup>146</sup> For instance, *Frederick*, a comrade of Herbert indicated that after separating from the RAAF he was generally too busy to bother about maintaining contact with former associates. *Frederick* recalled, 'When I left the RAAF [in 1976 after 12 years service], I didn't have a great lot of interaction with the service community. ... It was probably in later years that I ... started to take and interest once again ... because I was so flat out myself'. *Frederick*, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam'.

<sup>147</sup> B. Denny, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Michael Herbert)', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], 28 Oct. 2010, Adelaide, SA.

attended the Welcome Home Parade, the attendance rate was only 50%.<sup>148</sup> Hence, shying away from such activities, for whatever reason was common.<sup>149</sup>

Of 17 veterans surveyed, 10 retired before they reached the age of 60, and as of 2012, four remained in gainful employment.<sup>150</sup> Three main factors facilitated early retirement. First, after 20 years of service, members were able to access the Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefit Fund.<sup>151</sup> Second, veterans with qualifying service could apply for a Service Pension.<sup>152</sup> Third, in addition to these two potential income streams, the Government could grant a Special Rate Pension to a member who met the eligibility criteria.<sup>153</sup> Those who retired were generally content with their lot.<sup>154</sup>

Some comrades who experienced close associations with members of the Forgotten Six or who were directly involved in the loss incidents, remained troubled by their experiences. A number suffered from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.<sup>155</sup> Five out of 18 participants received a Special Rate Pension.

Nevertheless, most of the men's comrades dealt with the War's aftermath relatively successfully and the men's loss was not an overwhelming issue.

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<sup>148</sup> The attendance of 30,000 veterans at the Welcome Home Parade, assessed visually while the march participants were in the Assembly Area, is an estimate. J. Thurgar and C. Wright, *Welcome Home*, Fyshwick, ACT, Austwide Communications Pty Ltd, 1988, p. 7.

<sup>149</sup> For example, George, a comrade of Herbert recalled: 'I had a total withdrawal of participation in anything to do with Vietnam for a long while and couldn't bring myself to go to any Anzac Day marches for a long, long time and still have difficulty going to those. ... I didn't start wearing my ribbons until about 1975'. George, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam'.

<sup>150</sup> The other three retired after the age of 60, before 2012.

<sup>151</sup> This scheme required a compulsory contribution of five per cent of the member's salary.

<sup>152</sup> The service pension is available five years earlier than the normal age pension in recognition of 'the intangible effects of war that may result in premature ageing of the veteran and or loss of earning power'. Department of Veterans' Affairs, 'Service Pension', Department of Veterans' Affairs, Canberra, ACT, <[http://www.dva.gov.au/pensions\\_and\\_compensation/pensions\\_and\\_rates/Pages/service%20pension.aspx](http://www.dva.gov.au/pensions_and_compensation/pensions_and_rates/Pages/service%20pension.aspx)>, accessed 6 Feb. 2012.

<sup>153</sup> The 'Special Rate Pension' was formerly known as the 'Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Pension'.

<sup>154</sup> Les Maher, who had been involved in the Gillespie loss incident, describes his life since retiring in 1997: 'I'm totally busy. I'm senior vice president of the RSL. ... I run a Red Cross bus and transport service. ... I'm perfectly happy and my family is happy'. Maher, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally John Gillespie)'. Not all veterans are as contented as Maher.

<sup>155</sup> In two cases of reported Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, participants indicated the servicing clinician attributed the condition to trauma associated with the loss incident. In the other cases, no direct link with the loss incidents was claimed, although it was implied. Some individuals more than likely experienced other stressors at various stages during their lives. Without a detailed review of these cases by a competent clinician, a firm connection between the loss incidents and the diagnosis is problematic and the examination of any such linkage is outside the scope of this study.

## EMOTIONS

Some members of the families of the Forgotten Six, more so than the men's comrades, openly displayed their grief. Joan Herbert was the prototypical case, but grief was also painfully obvious in other families.<sup>156</sup> However, not all family members displayed their emotions. Robert Gillson Snr, Peter Gillson's older brother observed a degree of avoidance in his family, 'there wasn't a great ... display of emotion'.<sup>157</sup> Robert Gillson Jr had similar recollections, 'The males handled the loss in a more closed, if you were, masculine sort of a way. ... The men seemed to be less emotional about it, but I could tell there were deep feelings of remorse from everyone'.<sup>158</sup>

The second significant emotion, particularly among the comrades, was guilt. Guilt is a complex emotion that 'involves moral transgressions (real or imagined) in which people believe their action (or inaction) contributed to negative outcomes'. A 'specific circumstance' provides the object for guilt with an attendant 'sense of responsibility and painful feelings of remorse'.<sup>159</sup> Hence, to a certain extent the moral transgressions associated with guilt are 'evaluated somewhat apart from self'.<sup>160</sup>

The objects of guilt experienced by the comrades were first, the men's death; second, the non-recovery of their bodies; and third, the affected party's survival. Varying levels of ambiguity were associated with these *objects*.

Bill Host, a friend of Gillespie felt he was partly responsible for Gillespie's death. Gillespie flew on the medivac mission on 17 April 1971 because the aircraft would have staged over-night at the RAAF facility in Vung Tau, after delivering the casualties to the Australian Field Hospital, which was nearby. Host and Gillespie intended to meet in a local bar that evening to celebrate Host's birthday, which was the next day, 18 April.

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<sup>156</sup> Susanna Carver, the sister-in-law of Robert Carver recalled, 'They [Carver's parents] were a family living with a tragedy at the same time, you know. Robert's disappearance clouded the whole of their lives really, from when I met them. ... But you know she [Carver's mother] was never the same she was never ever the same'. Carver, 'Having a brother-in-law (Robert Carver) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'.

<sup>157</sup> Gillson Snr, 'Having a brother (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

<sup>158</sup> R. Gillson Jr, 'Having a father (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

<sup>159</sup> C. Tilghman-Osborne, D. A. Cole and J. W. Felton, 'Definition and measurement of guilt: Implications for clinical research and practice', *Clinical Psychology Review*, Vol. 30, Issue No. 5, 2010, p. 544.

<sup>160</sup> J. P. Tangney et alia, 'Shamed into anger? The relation of shame and guilt to anger and self-reported aggression', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 62, Issue No. 4, 1992, p. 669.

Host managed to get to Vung Tau on another helicopter and went to the agreed rendezvous. Gillespie did not show up. Host felt:

[Gillespie] was not supposed to be the medic that went out on that chopper ... but John went so we could meet each other in Vung Tau, and so in a way I felt guilty.<sup>161</sup>

The failure to complete the task of recovering the men's bodies during the War was an enduring cause of the guilt experienced by many comrades. For example, the non-recovery of Parker and Gillson's bodies engendered guilt in a number of individuals. Gordon Peterson, Parker's Acting Platoon Commander in November 1965, felt guilty for having left Parker behind.<sup>162</sup> Clive Williams, Gillson's Platoon Commander in 1965 doubted the 'correctness' of his actions regarding the non-recovery of Gillson's body.<sup>163</sup> Similarly, Bob Stephens, a crewmember on the Gillespie helicopter believed his efforts to extricate Gillespie from the wrecked helicopter were inadequate.<sup>164</sup> In 2007, Les Maher emotionally reflected on the loss of Gillespie, 'It's something you shouldn't do, you shouldn't leave anybody behind! And I did—bugger—because I couldn't get him out. What do you do?'.<sup>165</sup>

Guilt associated with not having done anything to have the cases investigated emerged in some cases. Sylvia Raye, an entertainer with the ABC Concert Party that performed at Phan Rang on the day Herbert and Carver disappeared, reflected 'what in the hell ever happened to those two guys? ... I felt a bit guilty that I had not done anything for thirty-five years'.<sup>166</sup>

Some suffered survivor guilt. Trevor Hagan, Parker's nominal Section Commander in 1965, felt guilty because Parker was commanding Hagan's section

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<sup>161</sup> Host, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally John Gillespie)'.

<sup>162</sup> Peterson indicated he felt guilty about not recovering Parker's body, 'it wasn't something that I was really proud of [leaving Parker behind]. I actually thought that it ... was a lousy thing to do'. Peterson, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Richard Parker)'.

<sup>163</sup> Williams recalled, 'I did feel perhaps a bit guilty about the whole thing, that we'd left a soldier behind. ... I didn't really know if I had done the right thing—or whether I'd done the wrong thing—and I was perhaps putting it out of my mind because it was something of a psychological dilemma for me'. Williams, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Peter Gillson)'.

<sup>164</sup> Stephens felt he could have done more to rescue Gillespie, 'I went on a big guilt trip: what should have I done, could I have done more? The fact John had to die, you had to live with that'. Wilson, 'War death lingers across the years'.

<sup>165</sup> Hawkins, 'Behind Enemy Lines: Part 2', Les Maher, 11 min.

<sup>166</sup> S. Raye, 'Involvement with Operation Aussies Home and the recovery of Australian MIAs from Vietnam', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], 2 May 2010, Blakehurst, NSW. Raye was an active member of OAH from 2004 onwards.

during the loss incident: Parker died and Hagan lived.<sup>167</sup> John Bird was supposed to fly as an observer with Herbert and Carver on their final mission. However, because of bad weather the tasking agency rescheduled the mission as a nighttime sortie, to be flown at high altitude. Bird did not fly with Herbert and Carver simply because he would not have been able to 'observe' anything. Bird felt guilty because he did not accompany Herbert and Carver on their fateful mission, and therefore survived.<sup>168</sup>

Such guilt was especially pernicious since no opportunity was available for reparation, at least not in the short-term.<sup>169</sup>

Physical involvement in the loss incidents was not necessary to produce feelings of guilt. Understandably, individuals who were closely involved in the loss incident—the traumatic event—may have been more susceptible to guilt; however, other men who were not physically present during the loss incident experienced the same emotion. Host and Bird are examples. Therefore, guilt relied to a certain extent on the bonding between comrades and decedents, and not necessarily on direct exposure to the traumatic event.

Some of the men's comrades were able to rationalise having to leave men behind in Vietnam and thereby sidestep feeling guilty. For instance, *George*, a comrade of Herbert indicated, 'if I'd been shot down and died up there, I didn't expect that I would be recovered'.<sup>170</sup>

Guilt was not necessarily confined to the comrades, and at least one family member experienced feelings of guilt. Fiona Pike, the daughter of John Gillespie suggested:

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<sup>167</sup> Hagan felt, 'It should've been me leading 1 Section you know, 'cos it was my section ... but he [Parker] was doing my job. ... I thought it was me there instead of Tiny [Parker]. ... I thought well Christ, I'm lucky he's dead in my place, you know'. Hagan, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Richard Parker)'.

<sup>168</sup> Bird recalled, 'I couldn't come to grips with the fact of why was I spared. It was almost as if sometimes, I wished it was me. I got suicidal, went through a couple of really bad patches and as the years went by, it just wouldn't go away'. Bird, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Michael Herbert and Robert Carver)'.

<sup>169</sup> 'The tension, remorse and regret of guilt can be quite uncomfortable, particularly when reparation is blocked for one reason or another'. Tangney et alia, 'Shamed into anger? The relation of shame and guilt to anger and self-reported aggression', pp. 669–70.

<sup>170</sup> *George*, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam'.

I think Christine [Gillespie's elder sister] had a lot of guilt, because they [John and Christine] didn't get on and ... I think there's a lot of guilt with Christine.<sup>171</sup>

Another emotion that surfaced soon after the losses was rage, which induced the secondary emotion of anger. These emotions were most prominent around Parker and Gillson who were the only two men killed in close combat with the enemy. The men's comrades directed their anger toward the opposing force and against the various echelons within Defence.<sup>172</sup> The *Americans* were a convenient focus for the anger felt by some members of 1 RAR.<sup>173</sup> These feelings were intense and sometimes persisted over the years. Colin Butterworth, a comrade Parker and Gillson, regardless of his rationalisation that sometimes recoveries are not possible, still felt 'angry, bloody angry, because we couldn't get in there because of the bullets and the noise. ... [I was] just angry for months. I think, really I was angry for bloody years'.<sup>174</sup>

In at least one instance within the families, anger toward the establishment emerged and flowed on to the decedent. Christine Gillespie summed up her feelings, including her feelings toward her brother:

A lot of my response to John's death was anger because rather than being sad, I suppose anger [emerged], because I was so angry at the war, so I could even be angry at John for dying in the war.<sup>175</sup>

Subsequent to the loss incidents, some of the men's comrades experienced feelings of nervousness, leading to apprehension and anxiety. For instance, Fisher's comrade, Les Liddington, who was a member of Fisher's patrol recalled the loss incident made

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<sup>171</sup> Pike, 'Having a father (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>172</sup> Gillson's elder brother expressed his feelings of anger toward the opposing force after his brother had been killed saying, 'I wanted to go back and kill as many as I could ... 'cos he got bumped off'. H. Piper, 'MIA: Missing-in-Action, 'Robert Gillson Snr, 34 min.

<sup>173</sup> The US 173<sup>rd</sup> Brigade HQ, 1 RAR's higher HQ would not approve an operation to attempt the post-combat recovery of Parker and Gillson. Albert Thirkell, a comrade of Gillson spoke of not having the opportunity to attempt recovery of Parker and Gillson, and his consequent anger: 'I was very hot hostile towards the Americans for pulling us out at that stage. ... I was very hot and hostile towards them for not giving us at least the chance of a recovery'. A. Thirkell, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Peter Gillson)', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], 30 Apr. 2010, Maryland, NSW. Thirkell served in Vietnam with 1 RAR from 3 June 1965 to 5 June 1965 and subsequently from 18 Mar. to 3 June 1968. Thirkell was a member of OAH but did not travel to Vietnam to investigate the Parker and Gillson cases.

<sup>174</sup> Butterworth, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Richard Parker and Peter Gillson)'.

<sup>175</sup> Hawkins, 'Behind Enemy Lines: Part 2', Christine Gillespie, 12 min.



him 'feel vulnerable'.<sup>176</sup> Sometimes survivors recalled this nervousness many years later.<sup>177</sup>

While most emotions were negative, optimism sometimes blossomed, at least initially, particularly regarding the MIA cases. For example, in a letter to Mr Fairbairn a year after her son was declared MIA, Joan Herbert wrote, 'They have no evidence to prove anything other than they are alive, what about the possibility of being ... [POWs], or is it easier to discount that theory!!'<sup>178</sup>

## **COGNITIVE PROCESSES**

Along with their practical actions/interactions members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades also engaged in acts of reasoning, perception and intuition to treat various issues associated with the men's loss. They sought to understand the loss incidents; they considered whether to accept the men's death; they contemplated the absence of the bodies; they progressively defined their expectations; and sought to understand the War and make meaning of their loss. Family members and comrades used these acts to resolve their contentious issues—to facilitate *getting on with their lives*. Figure 4–2 offers a relational scheme around these processes.

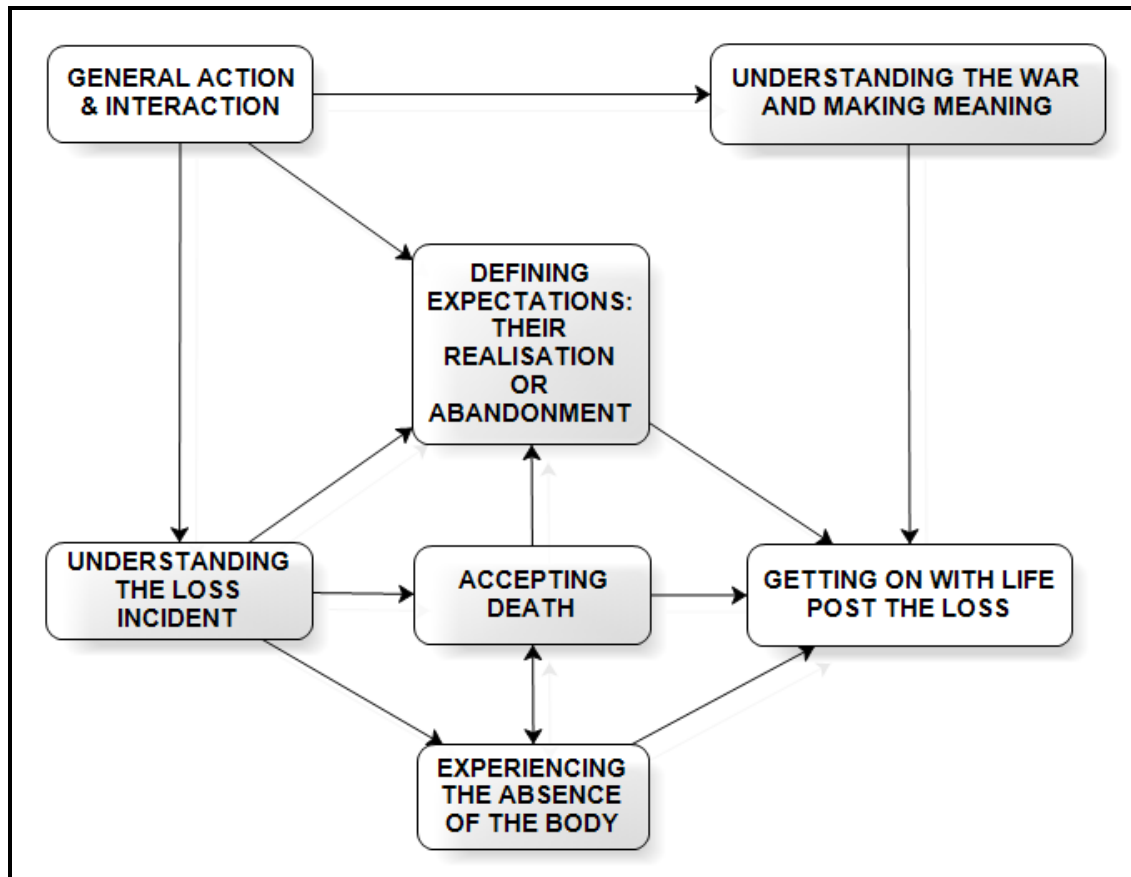
One of the more painful characteristics of 'living with the un-dead' was the paucity of information available to family members and comrades who felt a gnawing sense of loss and a high level of uncertainty about how the men might have met their deaths, and the disposition of their remains. Ambiguity was pervasive. Nevertheless, they developed their understandings of the loss incidents, first, to decide whether death had occurred; and second, to assess the possibility of recovering the men or their remains.

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<sup>176</sup> L. Liddington, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally David Fisher)', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], 1 Nov. 2010, Floreat, WA. Liddington served in Vietnam with the 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Reinforcement Unit, 3 SAS Squadron and 1 SAS Squadron from 3 Sept. 1969 to 3 Sept. 1970.

<sup>177</sup> Forty years after the event, Paul Saxton, a member of Fisher's patrol acknowledged his memories of the loss incident still engender a feeling of apprehension. Saxton reflected that any one of the five patrol members could have selected the defective rope that Fisher used, and which contributed to his fall: 'It was just a matter of bad luck on his part and good luck on mine. The roles could have been reversed for any of the five of us'. Saxton, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally David Fisher)'.

<sup>178</sup> J. P. Herbert, 'Request for details of inquiries being carried out regarding the disappearance of Michael Herbert and Robert Carver', [letter to Mr Fairbairn], 13 Nov. 1971, North Glenelg, SA, as contained in NAA: A703, 660/7/44310 Part 1.

**Figure 4-2: Cognitive Processes while 'Living with the Un-dead'**

This need to understand the loss incidents began with the casualty notifications and persisted until the recovery of the men's remains during 2007 to 2009. Various sources of information were available. First, the Defence Force provided initial details of the casualties and subsequently compiled official reports. Second, further information relating to the loss of the Forgotten Six was provided by individuals present during the loss incidents, and by others who were in-theatre, but not directly involved in the loss events. These individuals were generally familiar with the fighting conditions in Vietnam and better equipped than others to interpret available information. Third, the Government, in contrast to the Defence Force, sometimes provided information directly to the families. Fourth, the media and related literature occasionally published information about the loss incidents.<sup>179</sup>

For some, ambiguity stimulated the desire to understand what happened. For example, John Bird drew attention to the uncertainty surrounding the disappearance of

<sup>179</sup> As we have seen in Chapter 2, some accounts of the loss incidents as reported in the literature were erroneous.

Herbert: 'Mike should be with us and he's not here and worse still, we don't know where he is, or what's happened to him'.<sup>180</sup>

The casualty classifications provided the initial basis for understanding the loss incidents by family members and comrades, but some individuals needed more information. Without considerable guidance, advice and support, the circumstances surrounding the losses were difficult to comprehend. Because of their military service, some of the men's parents experienced a degree of acculturation to attune them with thinking more in line with the warrior class. In particular, the fathers of Fisher and Herbert served in the Royal Air Force and the RAAF respectively during the Second World War.<sup>181</sup> On 28 September 1969, the day after his son was reported as missing William Fisher requested advice about the height from which his son fell.<sup>182</sup> Similarly, on 5 November 1970, two days after Herbert and Carver went missing RAAF HQ Edinburgh, on behalf of John Herbert sought information about the search for the two men.<sup>183</sup> As mentioned earlier, Barry Carpenter, a comrade of Herbert recalled the avid thirst for information displayed by Herbert's father when Carpenter visited the family on his return to Australia.<sup>184</sup>

Others were not so keen to have the details, and in fact displayed little or no interest. Camel Hendrie candidly recalled 'I probably blocked it out and didn't want to know. All I knew [was] that he was killed in a helicopter crash'.<sup>185</sup> Hendrie did not seek further details for 'probably 10 or 15 years after the fact'.<sup>186</sup> Christine Gillespie had similar reservations about seeking further details of her brother's death.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Bird, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Michael Herbert and Robert Carver)'.

<sup>181</sup> The military service rendered by some of the men's parents during the Second World War may have assisted them in understanding the circumstances surrounding the losses, but to varying degrees, depending on the type of service and their individual experiences.

<sup>182</sup> HQ Second Military District, 'Request by PTE Fisher's father for further information', [immediate message A 31303 of 280240Z Sept. 1969 to HQ Aust Force Vietnam], Sydney, NSW, as contained in NAA: B2458, 2787344.

<sup>183</sup> HQ RAAF Edinburgh, 'Request for information by FLGOFF Herbert's father', [priority message P 309 of 050045Z Nov. 1970 to 2 Squadron RAAF], Edinburgh, SA, as contained in NAA: A703, 660/7/44310 Part 1.

<sup>184</sup> Carpenter, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Michael Herbert)'.

<sup>185</sup> Hendrie, 'Having a husband (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Christine Gillespie recalled, 'One of the problems with grief particularly when somebody has died violently is the ambiguity and ambivalence about really wanting to know and not wanting to

(Continued)

Family members' understandings of the loss incidents were often deficient. For instance, Lorraine Easton recalled, 'I just felt like I didn't have Peter's story, I didn't know how he died; I knew very little'.<sup>188</sup> The experience of other families mostly replicated Easton's experience.<sup>189</sup>

Nevertheless, some family members kept searching for the facts. For example, in 1992 Carver's parents were still trying to 'glean information'.<sup>190</sup> In 2004, it was evident to two of Fisher's comrades and members of his patrol, Les Liddington and Paul Saxton that Fisher's family knew very little about the loss incident and they therefore briefed the family.<sup>191</sup> Generally, family members accepted what others told them.<sup>192</sup> In some instances, they interpreted the information they received to support their previously adopted positions.<sup>193</sup>

Initially, Defence reports provided the best possible understandings of the loss incidents and the men's likely fate, but the bureaucracy only selectively released such

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know. I've understood over the years that we can only stand so much truth and reality, and sometimes it's easier to think things and construct something in your own mind'. Gillespie, 'Having a brother (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>188</sup> Easton, 'Having a husband (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

<sup>189</sup> In 1973, Edna Carver, Carver's mother had a general understanding of the loss incident but some of what she understood was not correct. Staff Reporters, 'Hopes kept alive for 2 airmen lost in Vietnam', p. 9. The understanding of Herbert's younger brother, Shane Herbert was different, but again ill-founded. Herbert, 'Having a brother (Michael Herbert) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'.

<sup>190</sup> Frederick, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam'.

<sup>191</sup> Paul Saxton recalled members of Fisher's family 'wanted to talk to us ... so we got in a quiet room and Les [Liddington] spoke very well about the incident and basically it was news to them, which was a the bitterest shock to me'. Saxton, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally David Fisher)'. Les Liddington added the family 'didn't appear to know anything about the incident at all, except that their brother didn't come home'. Liddington, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally David Fisher)'.

<sup>192</sup> Robert Gillson Snr, Peter Gillson's elder brother reported, 'I sort of I accepted what I was told as the facts and um there was no reason for any hope you know'. Gillson Snr, 'Having a brother (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

<sup>193</sup> Wendy Mudford, Parker's widow provides an example of a person looking for information that supported her optimistic position. In late 2000, Mudford still had difficulty accepting her husband was dead. According to Trevor Hagan, a comrade of Parker's, Mudford 'had this letter from bloody Kim Beasley who ... stated ... we had searched the area of the contact and couldn't find anything'. Hagan, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Richard Parker)'. Because Australian forces searched the area and failed to recover Parker's body, this could suggest at least to the optimistic that perhaps Parker had not been killed.

detail, even to the families.<sup>194</sup> The authorities serviced the Herbert family reasonably well regarding the provision of such information, compared to some other families.

Some recollections of the comrades are difficult to reconcile with official records or information that subsequently became available, particularly with the Parker and Gillson cases. For example, Albert Thirkell, a comrade of Gillson erroneously recalled, 'They told us there was probably from a platoon to a company [of enemy] up there but then we found out later on it was the bloody arse-end of the regiment'.<sup>195</sup> (In other words, the opposing force was disproportionately large—factually incorrect, but helpful in dealing with the loss.) Similarly, the understanding of Robert Gillson Snr was deficient when he assessed there would not be any remains of his brother available for recovery.<sup>196</sup> However, regarding the Herbert and Carver incident, the men's comrades were sound in their analysis leading to a realistic understanding of the loss event. George, a comrade of Herbert deduced, 'because we hadn't heard of any beepers going off ... and we didn't hear of any emergency ... [devices] being activated ... we didn't think that the aircraft had given them an opportunity to eject'.<sup>197</sup>

The understandings of the family members and comrades changed over time either because others provided further information or because individuals purposefully sought out additional detail. However, as mentioned earlier, the Government Mission of May 1984 did little to enhance these understandings. Eventually, in most cases, the desire to seek out further details waned.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> The authorities released some details from the official investigations to the families, in response to questions that they raised. Defence originally classified the reports of the Courts of Inquiry into the Fisher loss incident and the one relating to Herbert Carver as 'CONFIDENTIAL'. RAAF HQ downgraded the latter document to 'UNCLASSIFIED' when they released it to me in 2002. W. H. Spears, 'Court of Inquiry into the loss of Herbert and Carver', [letter to J. Bourke], 19 Dec. 2002, Canberra, ACT.

<sup>195</sup> Thirkell, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Peter Gillson)'. In 2006, Nguyen Van Bao, the commander of the force that opposed A Company 1 RAR in 1965 said he only had 10 to 20 men with him during the engagement.

<sup>196</sup> Robert Gillson, Peter Gillson's elder brother, who also served with 1 RAR in 1965–66, recalled, 'in my mind there ... was nothing there, like when you [have] been told that the Yanks shelled the area. ... I never thought there was any remains or anything'. Gillson Snr, 'Having a brother (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'. Although the artillery units supporting 1 RAR applied an appreciable volume of fire to the loss incident site, it is rather unlikely such fire would have been completely obliterated Gillson's body.

<sup>197</sup> George, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam'.

<sup>198</sup> Shane Herbert, Michael Herbert's younger brother recalled, 'It got to the stage where, rather than keep pursuing information, the less that was said, the less painful it became. A lot of stories [emerged] over the years. ... I would take a lot of phone calls from people, ex-

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Receipt of the news of the casualties initiated a delicate process that eventually led to most family members and comrades of the Forgotten Six accepting they were dead. Nevertheless, those affected still required sustainable evidence to predicate their conscious acceptance of death; however, in the body's absence, unless the survivor had first hand knowledge to confirm death, such evidence consisted of the opinions of others.<sup>199</sup> Accepting death was a highly individualistic qualitative consideration, shrouded in ambiguity.

A difference exists between non-acceptance of death and denial of death. Non-acceptance is the more rational state, where a survivor evaluates available evidence and concludes death has not taken place. Denial manifests when the affected party simply rejects the evidence, regardless of quality, and refuses to acknowledge death. For example, Parker's sister, Pat Woodland 'always thought he was going to turn up; it was just one of those things. When you [OAH] finally found the remains, I just had to accept that he was killed'.<sup>200</sup> Woodland's denial spanned 42 years.

Acceptance of death operated on two levels: first, the conscious level where pertinent facts were engaged—the reality; and, second, at the subconscious level where, despite the conscious acceptance of death, hope persisted.<sup>201</sup> Although Joan Herbert consciously accepted her son was dead, a glimmer of hope, tinged with realism appeared in 1984, 'I have at times thought that I may see Michael walk in the back door, but I know now that ... is not going to happen'.<sup>202</sup> A fine line exists between hope and denial. In some cases, it is difficult to establish when the family members and comrades consciously accepted death.<sup>203</sup>

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servicemen, people who would ring and say that they were the son of Michael and all that sort of bullshit'. Herbert, 'Having a brother (Michael Herbert) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'.

<sup>199</sup> Prior to the recovery of a missing individual, evidence to confirm death emerged in various forms. First, receiving advice from official sources regarding the loss incident was the principal means by which families received information regarding the possibility of death having occurred. Second, individuals who were involved in the loss incidents and who were able to assess first hand whether or not death occurred provided another important source of information.

<sup>200</sup> Woodland, 'Having a brother (Richard Parker) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

<sup>201</sup> Considering the authorities initially classified Parker, Fisher, Herbert and Carver as MIA (although Parker's classification was qualified as 'missing in action presumed killed'), it was reasonable for these families to hope, initially at least that perhaps death had not occurred.

<sup>202</sup> Haran, 'God comforted me: Mother: Thirteen years of anguish'.

<sup>203</sup> Sourcing of reliable data concerning the hopes that people entertained regarding the men's possible survival was difficult for two reasons. First, interview data was collected after the men's recovery and earlier hopes of survival flew in the face of reason. Hence, individuals may have

(Continued)

A number of other factors besides understanding the loss incidents had the potential to influence members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades as they considered whether to accept death. Such factors included the intensity and duration of relationships with the decedent and the degree of religiosity of family members and comrades. The discussion below references the following timeframes: first, short-term acceptance, within two years of the losses; second, medium-term acceptance, before 1986, after family members and comrades assimilated the results of the Government Mission of 1984, within 15 to 21 years after the losses; and third, long-term acceptance after 1986, more than 15 to 21 years after the losses.

Because family members and comrades did not have access to all pertinent data, they sometimes necessarily predicated their decisions on the casualty classifications. For the two men initially classified as KIA, Gillson and Gillespie, 14 individuals indicated the time-span within which they consciously accepted death, as shown in Table 4–7.

**Table 4–7: Conscious Acceptance of Death in KIA Cases**

GROUP	SHORT-TERM	MEDIUM-TERM	LONG-TERM <sup>204</sup>
Family Members	7		
Comrades	6		1
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>13</b>		<b>1</b>

Hence, for KIA casualties most family members and comrades consciously accepted death within two years or less.<sup>205</sup> Nevertheless, in some instances, even in these KIA cases, the absence of a body made it difficult to accept death. Lorraine Easton was a typical case, 'because there were no remains, I guess I just always

been reluctant to reveal any such earlier hopes. Second, a number of key family members were not interviewed either because they were dead or incapable or because they did not take part in this study.

<sup>204</sup> In the Table 4–7, the individual who did not accept death until the long-term was Albert Thirkell, a comrade of Gilson. Thirkell did not finally accept Gillson was dead until 'the nineties'. Thirkell mainly based his belief on spurious information: 'I heard they found Gilly's dog tags down in the Plain of Reeds. I reckon he was still alive. They dragged him out and had him down there and patched him up'. Thirkell, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Peter Gillson)'. The area where Parker and Gillson were lost was in the order of 160 kilometres to the east of the Plain of Reeds and in Apr. 2007, the searchers unearthed Gillson's dog tags along with his remains in the area where the loss incident took place.

<sup>205</sup> As mentioned earlier, the widows of Gillson and Gillespie, whose husbands were declared as KIA soon after their loss, 'moved on' with a degree of celerity. The timing of these widows entering into new marriages or marriage-like relationships might indicate the time by which they consciously accepted their former husbands were dead.

wondered had he really passed away'.<sup>206</sup> Christine Gillespie also found it difficult to accept death in the absence of the body.<sup>207</sup> Similarly, Gillespie's widow, Carmel Hendrie felt 'not having a body was weird, you know, is it final? ... For someone to die there's got to be a body and we didn't have that. I think it screwed us up'.<sup>208</sup> Even though Robert Gillson Snr accepted, as early as 1965, that his brother died, in 1984 he admitted 'not having a body made it a lot harder to take; you think there's always that doubt [that he may not have died]'.<sup>209</sup>

For the four men who were classified MIA—Parker, Fisher, Herbert and Carver—17 individuals indicated they consciously accepted death at the times indicated in Table 4–8.

**Table 4–8: Conscious Acceptance of Death in MIA Cases**

GROUP	SHORT-TERM	MEDIUM-TERM	LONG-TERM <sup>210</sup>
Family Members		6	2
Comrades	8	1	
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>

As the data shows eight family members associated with these cases delayed the conscious acceptance of death for two years or more, whereas the men's comrades mostly accepted death within the short-term. Very few of the men's comrades maintained *hope* that death had not occurred. Nevertheless, Paul Saxton, a member of

<sup>206</sup> Easton, 'Having a husband (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

<sup>207</sup> Christine Gillespie recalled her emphatic statement to other family members on the night the news of her brother's death was delivered: "'Well, how do they know he's dead, if there was no body. You're all being stupid," I yelled'. C. Gillespie, 'Burying the ghosts of "Nam"', *Age* (Melbourne), 19 Aug. 2006, sec. Insight, p. 7.

<sup>208</sup> Hendrie, 'Having a husband (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>209</sup> H. Piper, 'MIA: Missing-in-Action', Robert Gillson Snr, 3 min.

<sup>210</sup> The two family members who were reluctant to accept death consciously until the long-term were Parker's widow, Wendy Mudford and Parker's sister, Pat Woodland. Considering Parker's widow did not re-marry for more than 18 years after the loss, she appears to have been reluctant to accept Parker was dead even though in Apr. 1966, the Officer-in-Charge of CARO issued a Death Certificate for Parker saying he was 'missing ... and is for official purposes presumed to be dead'. NAA: B2458, 213963. However, other factors may have contributed to the delay in Mudford remarrying. As mentioned earlier, Woodland did not accept her brother died in Vietnam until OAH recovered his remains in 2007.



the patrol where Fisher was lost held out *hope* for many years—probably until Fisher's funeral—that perhaps Fisher had survived.<sup>211</sup>

The degree of religiosity of family members and comrades had the potential to influence their acceptance of death. Table 4–9 compares the religiosity of a selection of family members and comrades of the men. Within this sample of 33 individuals, 28 were Christians and 17 of these were either religious or very religious. Family members displayed a higher degree of religiosity than the men's comrades.<sup>212</sup>

**Table 4–9: Religiosity of the Family Members and the Comrades of the Men**

GROUP AND NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	RESPONDENTS BY LEVEL OF RELIGIOSITY				
	CHRISTIAN			AGNOS	ATHST
	VR	R	NP		OC
Family Members—14 (All Christians)	3	7	4		
Comrades—19 (14 Christians)	2	5	7	1	2

Table 4–10 shows the timing of acceptance of death and the degree of religiosity of 14 individuals related to the KIA cases, Gillson and Gillespie. All seven family members accepted death in the short-term, regardless of their degree of religiosity.<sup>213</sup> Six of the men's comrades of various persuasions, including four Christians also accepted death in the short-term.<sup>214</sup>

<sup>211</sup> Paul Saxton reported, 'There was always doubt in my mind [that Fisher died] and yet from the height he fell I tended to think that there may not have been any chance [of survival]. ... But there was always hope. ... I suppose up until his funeral I thought that there might have been some chance that he was out there and alive ... however remote'. Saxton, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally David Fisher)'.

<sup>212</sup> There does not appear to be any simple explanation as to why the degree of religiosity displayed by the two groups differs so markedly. The drift away from Christianity was a generational issue reflecting the secularisation of Australian society during the twentieth century; however, the average ages of family members and comrades on whom data are held differ by only eight years and four months, so this initial view might not be sustainable. It is interesting to note the persuasions of the younger family members were Christian, following their parents' lead, and the question could be asked as to why the comrades' religious persuasions were not similarly grounded by family experience.

<sup>213</sup> Gillespie's younger sister, Fiona Gillespie (1957–2009), who was a long-term acceptor, is not included in this data set since her degree of religiosity was not established.

<sup>214</sup> The aberrant case who delayed acceptance of death until the long-term was Thirkell but his reasons for delaying acceptance, as discussed earlier, appear not to be religiously motivated.

**Table 4–10: Religiosity and the Timing of Acceptance of Death for KIA Cases**

RELIGIOSITY	FAMILY MEMBERS			COMRADES		
	SHORT	MEDIUM	LONG	SHORT	MEDIUM	LONG
Agnostic				1		
Atheist						
Other Convictions				1		
Non Practising	3			1		
Religious	2			1		1
Very Religious	2			2		
Unassigned						
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>7</b>			<b>6</b>		<b>1</b>

Table 4–11 shows the timing of acceptance of death related to the religiosity of 15 individuals connected with the MIA cases, Parker, Fisher, Herbert and Carver.

**Table 4–11: Religiosity and the Timing of Acceptance of Death for MIA Cases**

RELIGIOSITY	FAMILY MEMBERS			COMRADES		
	SHORT	MEDIUM	LONG <sup>215</sup>	SHORT	MEDIUM <sup>216</sup>	LONG
Agnostic						
Atheist				1		
Other Convictions				1		
Non Practising			1	4	1	
Religious		4		2		
Very Religious		1				
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>

Five family members, who were either religious or very religious, delayed the acceptance of death until the medium-term. One other delayed acceptance for much

<sup>215</sup> Wendy Mudford, Parker's widow, who was a long-term acceptor, is not included in this data set since her degree of religiosity was not established. Pat Woodland, Parker's sister was also a long-term acceptor but her reasons for delaying the acceptance of her brother's death do appear not to be religiously motivated.

<sup>216</sup> Paul Saxton, a comrade of Fisher delayed the conscious acceptance of Fisher's death until the medium-term although, as discussed earlier Saxton's conscious acceptance of death did not obliterate his hope that Fisher may have survived. Saxton, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally David Fisher)'. Nevertheless, Saxton's delay was not religiously motivated. He was an atheist.

longer. However, eight of the men's comrades of various persuasions, including six Christians, accepted death in the short-term, with only one delaying acceptance until the medium-term.

In summary, the understandings of the loss incidents, which the casualty classifications effectively summarised, essentially drove the acceptance of death. As might be expected, family members and comrades generally accepted the death of the individuals declared as KIA more readily than those declared MIA. In MIA cases, family members were more likely to delay the acceptance of death than were the men's comrades and familial bonding may have contributed to this delay. Religiosity essentially had no effect on the timing of acceptance of death in KIA cases. However, for MIA cases, the degree of religiosity may have influenced the family members to delay acceptance; however, the depth of familial bonding, and a lesser level of understanding of the loss incidents, compared to the men's comrades may also have played a role. Hence, it is not possible to determine the extent to which religiosity delayed the acceptance of death by family members in these MIA cases. Religiosity certainly did not inhibit the acceptance of death by the comrades in MIA cases: the fellow was dead, regardless of his mother's degree of religiosity! By the early 1980s, even though most family members and comrades of the Forgotten Six accepted the men were dead, the whereabouts of their remains and the forensic matters surrounding the death events remained unclear. Ambiguity persisted.

Occasionally it is suggested the recovery of the missing is a universally accepted principle within the military, but such a belief is not necessarily correct. Some family members and comrades were not interested in recovering the men's remains, but others were anxious to do so and this desire persisted until it was satisfied during 2007 to 2009.

Some saw the presence of the body as necessary to confirm death. In addition, some saw the body's absence as an impediment to the grieving process. Robert Gillson Snr opined:

It was hard to ... grieve over something that you couldn't actually see like a grave: you can go and see it whereas we had nothing, only words ... that was a bit difficult to grieve over.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> Gillson Snr, 'Having a brother (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

Having a body was important because it enabled the conduct of a funeral. On 10 December 2002 in Adelaide, Michael Herbert's old school, Sacred Heart College dedicated the main gates of the School to 'the memory of Michael Patrick Herbert and all past students ... who gave their lives for Australia in war and peace'. Bill Denny, a friend of the Herbert family noted Joan Herbert portrayed this ceremony as a funeral. Denny recalled, 'at the end of it she said, "This is the funeral that Michael never had". We never saw it that way, but she did'.<sup>218</sup> Similarly, Lorraine Easton stated her preference for having a funeral saying, 'To lay him [her former husband] to rest was the ultimate of what a widow would want'.<sup>219</sup>

Two factors, the extent of bonding with the decedent and religiosity potentially influenced the attitudes of members of the men's families and their comrades, regarding the presence of the body.

Fourteen family members and comrades declared their degree of religiosity and their preference regarding the presence of the body. Five family members and four comrades of the men indicated a preference for having the body present as indicated in Table 4–12.

**Table 4–12: Cases where Family Members and Comrades preferred the Presence of the Body**

GROUP	NUMBER OF CASES	AVERAGE PERIOD OF CONTACT WITH DECEDENT	RELIGIOSITY			
			VR	R	NP	OC
Family (not including children)	5	15.8 years	2	1	2	
Comrades	4	18.25 months		1	3	
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>9</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	

However, as indicated in Table 4–13 not all family members, specifically the children of Gillson and Gillespie considered the presence of the body as a necessity. A number of comrades held similar sentiments.

<sup>218</sup> Denny, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Michael Herbert)'.

<sup>219</sup> Easton, 'Having a husband (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

**Table 4–13: Cases where Family Members and Comrades did not require the Presence of the Body**

GROUP	RELATIONSHIP		RELIGIOSITY			
	NUMBER OF CASES	AVERAGE PERIOD OF CONTACT WITH DECEDENT	VR	R	NP	OC
Children of the Decedents	2	13.5 months—but these children had no memories of their fathers		1	1	
Comrades	3	8.7 months			2	1
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>5</b>			<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>

The children of Gillson and Gillespie both acknowledged that because they did not know their fathers, not having a body and consequently not having a grave had little effect on them.<sup>220</sup> The non-availability of Fisher's body did not concern Paul Saxton, 'I don't think it [the body's absence] really affected me at all and no ... it didn't really affect me'.<sup>221</sup> The body's absence also did not concern *George*, a comrade of Herbert, 'I don't think that [the absence of the bodies of Herbert and Carver] affected me at all'.<sup>222</sup> The three comrades who did not require the presence of the body had experienced contact with the decedents for a shorter period (8.7 months) than comrades who preferred the presence of the body (18.25 months) suggesting, but not necessarily proving that perhaps the level of bonding encouraged the preference for having the body available.

Overall, most expressed a preference for having the body present. Stronger ante-mortem bonding appeared to induce such a desire, thereby providing the opportunity of having a funeral and a grave or a similar memorial. Higher degrees of

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<sup>220</sup> Gillson's son, Robert Gillson Jr, candidly admitted 'It didn't affect me a great deal to be honest. I never knew him'. Gillson Jr, 'Having a father (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'. Gillespie's daughter expressed a similar sentiment saying, 'It [not having a body and a grave] didn't really affect me because I was only two-and-a-half [when he was killed]'. Pike, 'Having a father (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>221</sup> Saxton, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally David Fisher)'.

<sup>222</sup> *George*, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam'. *George* indicated he was able to accept death on a purely intellectual basis.

religiosity may have encouraged the preference for having the body present, but the evidence to support this is not conclusive.<sup>223</sup>

The expectations of family members and comrades regarding the possibility of recovering the men alive, at least for the men classified as MIA, emerged on notification of the casualties and persisted until death was accepted. Upon the acceptance of death, expectations generally shifted to the possibility of recovering the men's remains.<sup>224</sup> Expectations ranged from having no expectations, to not wanting any recovery action undertaken, through ambivalence, to expecting, or at least hoping recovery operations might eventuate. However, the difficulties associated with such operations, as perceived by the members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades often coloured these expectations.

Susanna Carver, the sister-in-law of Robert Carver said the family had no expectations related to the recovery of Carver's remains 'because ... there wasn't all that much known'.<sup>225</sup> Similarly, Bill Host, a comrade and friend of Gillespie simply accepted nobody was likely to recover Gillespie's remains.<sup>226</sup> Over the years, Joan Herbert made her expectations known to the Government and although the Herbert family initially would have appreciated the recovery of Michael Herbert's remains, they eventually 'stopped pushing for it'.<sup>227</sup>

At least within the Gillespie family, the expectation was authorities would or should not undertake any recovery action. In 1971 Gillespie's widow sought advice about whether any remains or artefacts would be available at the loss incident site.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> The religious denomination of the Christian respondents appeared to have little bearing on the need to have the body present. Of the eight declared Christians who expressed the need for the body to be available, five were Roman Catholic and three were Church of England. The two comrades who were Christians and who did not see the body's presence as necessary were both Roman Catholic.

<sup>224</sup> In the cases of Gillson and Gillespie, whom the Defence force classified as KIA early in the process, the expectations of family members and some comrades moved more quickly to the possibility of recovery of remains.

<sup>225</sup> Carver, 'Having a brother-in-law (Robert Carver) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'.

<sup>226</sup> Host said, 'I just thought it was a normal attitude of our bloody defence force and Government that ... it was yesterday and, and [sic] we'll forget about it'. Host, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally John Gillespie)'.

<sup>227</sup> Herbert, 'Having a brother (Michael Herbert) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'.

<sup>228</sup> Carmel Hendrie, John Gillespie's widow remembers asking for advice on what might be recoverable, 'I kept saying to the Army back then, are you sure there are no remains, not even a tiny little piece, nothing?' Hendrie, 'Having a husband (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

Nonetheless, she accepted the Army's view that the recovery of any surviving remains was not possible.<sup>229</sup> Collectively the family 'felt that if there were remains, they should stay at the site in Vietnam, undisturbed and at peace'.<sup>230</sup>

Some family members and comrades were ambivalent in their attitudes toward recovery operations. For example, Robert Gillson Snr said 'in my mind there was nothing to be found and I moved on', but later 'thought there should've been something done'.<sup>231</sup> Clive Williams, Gillson's Platoon Commander in 1965 felt it 'didn't really make too much difference' whether the men were 'in the ground in Vietnam or ... in the ground in Australia'.<sup>232</sup> George, a comrade of Herbert was more interested in understanding why the aircraft crashed, as opposed to recovering the men's remains.<sup>233</sup> Nevertheless, most of the men's comrades felt recovery of remains was a desirable course of action. For instance, Les Liddington, a comrade of Fisher, 'just hoped like hell that he'd be found'.<sup>234</sup> Gordon Peterson, Parker's Acting Platoon Commander in November 1965, viewed the recovery of Parker's remains as a moral obligation.<sup>235</sup>

Although most family members and comrades preferred having the body present, they progressively realised such an outcome might be politically difficult to achieve. Australia opened diplomatic relations with the DRV in 1973 and subsequently

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<sup>229</sup> HQ Aust Force Vietnam, 'Remains of Lance Corporal J. F. Gillespie (Deceased)', [routine message PS 10733 of 210825Z July 1971 to Army HQ], Saigon, Vietnam, as contained in NAA: B2458, 3170244.

<sup>230</sup> C. Gillespie, C. Hendrie and F. Pike, 'John Gillespie MIA', [e-mail to Bruce Billson], 19 Aug. 2006, Perth, WA. That Gillespie had been incinerated influenced the family's thinking. Gillespie's elder sister, Christine recalled 'in the 80s it hadn't mattered so much because ... it [Vietnam] was beautiful and there wasn't a body [but] if there was a ... whole body I would've thought it would be ... shocking not to bring him back, but a few ashes seemed different to me'. Gillespie, 'Having a brother (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>231</sup> Gillson Snr, 'Having a brother (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

<sup>232</sup> Williams, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Peter Gillson)'. Williams is an agnostic.

<sup>233</sup> George explained his position saying, 'I didn't think that the recovery was a desirable outcome. I thought solving the riddle, the puzzle, of what happened to them was a desirable outcome ... so I wanted the puzzle solved as to what actually happened to them'. George, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam'.

<sup>234</sup> Liddington, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally David Fisher)'.

<sup>235</sup> Peterson recalled, 'Your job is to look after them, not mamby pamby, them but you're responsible for them. ... Tiny [Parker] was one of my soldiers—it was just our job to get him and not leave him on the battlefield like a piece of garbage'. Peterson, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Richard Parker)'.

dealt with the Socialist Republic of Vietnam from 1975 onwards. Although cooperation between the two Governments to recover the men appeared reasonable, some perceived the situation differently. For example, Robert Gillson Snr acknowledged the political impediments to recovery operations, 'because it was a communist country ... there was no hope of going back there, not that I wanted to (laughs)'.<sup>236</sup>

The expectations of family members and comrades varied and changed over time. Contemplating their contentious issue over the years washed out the high levels of emotionality that existed at the time of the loss incidents, to be progressively replaced by pragmatism. Most thought the Government should take the necessary recovery action but considered it problematic in the face of political realities and the physical degree of difficulty associated with any recovery operations. The passage of time ameliorated expectations and by the turn of the century, very few family members and comrades held any hope that the men's remains would be recovered.

One might expect as part of the process of seeking closure, comrades and particularly family members would want to ascribe meaning to the men's loss by situating their service in the overall context of the War. The discussion below examines this issue by considering the attitudes of family members and comrades toward Australia's involvement in the War, the reasons why the men placed themselves in harm's way, and the perceptions of the value of the men's service—considering such service cost them their lives.

The attitudes toward Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War varied widely. Some simply had no interest or opinion in the matter, at least not initially.<sup>237</sup> Others

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<sup>236</sup> Gillson Snr, 'Having a brother (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'. Similarly, Colin Butterworth, a comrade of Parker and Gillson recognised 'the Government was hog tied ... they just said it just can't be done. There were too many constraints between the North and us'. Butterworth, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Richard Parker and Peter Gillson)'.

<sup>237</sup> Carmel Hendrie, Gillespie's widow recalled: 'I cannot say I had an opinion on the Vietnam War. It didn't touch me: ... I was still young: you know, I was sixteen, seventeen: you know, I didn't want to know about war'. Hendrie, 'Having a husband (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.



were directly opposed to Australia's participation.<sup>238</sup> Twenty-seven cases revealed their attitudes to Australian involvement in the War, as indicated in Table 4–14.<sup>239</sup>

**Table 4–14: Attitudes toward Australia's Involvement in the Vietnam War**

GROUP	DURING THE WAR			AFTER THE WAR		
	CASES	FOR	AGAINST	CASES	FOR	AGAINST
Family	7	4	3	9	5	4
Comrades	18	16	2	17	7	10

One of the initial dissenters was a National Serviceman and the other was a civilian. Over the years, the comrades expressed a marked increase in their opposition to the War. Three comrades changed their minds within eight years of their initial deployment.<sup>240</sup> The other five, who had all been regular service personnel, changed their minds subsequently because of their closer examination of the War. The proportion of supportive family members during and after the War did not change significantly.

One could ask whether opposition to the War devalued the men's service. Herbert's comrade, Barry Carpenter summed up the attitude of most regular service members to the War, 'I go where I'm told and do what I'm supposed to do [regardless of public opinion]'.<sup>241</sup> The Australian public may have directed a certain amount of venom at returning veterans but the reconciliatory process of the 1980s and the 1990s

<sup>238</sup> Gillespie's sister, Christine Gillespie recalled, 'Not only did I think the war was a waste of time and a waste of lives ... I didn't believe in the Domino Theory or that the Yellow Peril was coming down on us and ... I was a bit of a lefty and I did march in the moratoriums'. Gillespie, 'Having a brother (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>239</sup> Carmel Hendrie, Gillespie's widow and Robert Gillson Jr, Peter Gillson's son are included in the 'AFTER THE WAR' numbers but are not included in the 'DURING THE WAR' count because Hendrie did not have an opinion on the matter at that time, and Gillson was only born in 1965. The 'AFTER THE WAR' count excludes Trevor Hagan, a comrade of Parker because his statements are ambivalent. Australian War Memorial, 'Accession Number: S02603, Veterans' Voices: Maroochy Libraries' Oral History Project: Interview of Trevor Hagan by Gary McKay on 31 May 2001', Canberra, ACT, Australian War Memorial; and, Hagan, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Richard Parker)'.

<sup>240</sup> Butterworth, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Richard Parker and Peter Gillson)'; O'Brien, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally John Gillespie)'; and, Peterson, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Richard Parker)'.

<sup>241</sup> Carpenter, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Michael Herbert)'.

redressed that issue. In the eyes and minds of those who lived on, opposition to the War did not devalue the men's service.

Furthermore, all six men were volunteers and had their personal reasons for enlisting.<sup>242</sup> Where the men were under 21, they needed the consent of a parent or guardian to enlist. Hence, some parents were complicit in enabling the men to serve in Vietnam.<sup>243</sup> Those who did not support the War may have faced a conundrum. Their son, brother or comrade had sacrificed their life for a cause the survivors did not support. However, the men were following their chosen career and this may have helped salve the hurt of the dissenters. In general, ascribing meaning to the men's loss was generally not an issue for members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades, simply because the men died doing what they had chosen to do, and were providing a service to Australia—even if some quarters of society took several years to acknowledge that service.

The obvious question is: 'Why him? Why did he, in particular have to die?' This basic question does not emerge from the data. The question of 'Why him?' did not surface because those who lived on were able ascribe meaning to the loss.

Recalling 28 of the 33 individuals surveyed were Christians, the discussion below examines how family members and comrades of the Forgotten Six used religion, specifically Christianity as a supporting strategy as they dealt with the men's loss.

Religion provided solace for some, particularly for those who believed in the after-life. For example, on her deathbed Joan Herbert, Herbert's mother called on her religion and achieved a certain level of closure. Mrs Herbert believed she was about to meet her son in the after-life.<sup>244</sup> Gillespie's widow sought clerical assistance but felt

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<sup>242</sup> Carmel Hendrie, Gillespie's widow recalls 'John was always a provider. That's why he decided he was going to join the Army'. Hendrie, 'Having a husband (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'. Michael Herbert 'was always keen on flying, winning an Air Training Corps flying scholarship at 16 when he was still at Sacred Heart College in Adelaide'. Staff Reporters, 'Hopes kept alive for 2 airmen lost in Vietnam'.

<sup>243</sup> Richard Heath changed his name to Richard Parker on 11 Apr. 1961, declaring he had 'no legal guardian' and enlisted in the Army on the same day, at the age of 19. NAA: B2458, 213963. Peter Gillson, being only 17 at the time of enlistment needed parental consent. NAA: B2458, 37857. David Fisher had just turned 21 at the time he enlisted. NAA: B2458, 2787344. Herbert joined the RAAF as a cadet on 17 Jan. 1964, aged 17, with parental consent. NAA: A703, 660/7/44310 Part 1. Carver was 22 when he enlisted, as was Gillespie. NAA: A703, 660/7/119223 Part 1; and, NAA: B2458, 3170244 respectively.

<sup>244</sup> Denny, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Michael Herbert)'.

religion did not assist her—'religion went out the door'.<sup>245</sup> Similarly, Albert Thirkell, a comrade of Gillson, gained no solace from religion, especially after he purposefully sought out a man of the cloth.

He said that it was God's will that he'd been chosen and taken away and there must be something better for Peter [Gillson] and his family. But I can't see anything better for Pete—I mean the poor bugger's dead.<sup>246</sup>

Two questions informed the extent to which religion assisted family members and comrades in dealing with the loss of the Forgotten Six: First, did individuals seek assistance from the clergy? Second, did they feel religion was beneficial? Table 4–15 summarises the responses to these two questions.

**Table 4–15: Seeking Clerical Assistance and the Perceived Benefit of Religion**

GROUP	ASSISTANCE SOUGHT			RELIGION WAS OF BENEFIT		
	YES	NO	TOTAL	YES <sup>247</sup>	NO	TOTAL
Family Members	4	5	9	4	5	9
Comrades	2	6	8	1	7	8
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>17</b>

Of the six respondents who sought assistance, five, mainly family members felt they benefited; however, religion provided only limited solace to the men's comrades. Eleven individuals did not bother to call on clerical support. Hence, drawing on religious capital was not a widely used strategy, but it did benefit some, mainly family members.

### **OUTCOMES OF 'LIVING WITH THE UN-DEAD'**

The actions/interactions of the family members and comrades of the Forgotten Six from the time when the men were lost until 2001 resulted in a number of outcomes, the most significant being the attainment of various levels of closure and the development of

<sup>245</sup> Hendrie opined, 'I thought I was a good Catholic ... [and] when John died ... I needed to talk to a priest. The priest was hopeless: it was just pathetic: I shouldn't have even asked. The Catholic priests in Melbourne ... were very good, I must admit. I can't say it strengthened my religion, no, I probably went the other way ... No, religion, it went out the door'. Hendrie, 'Having a husband (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>246</sup> Thirkell, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Peter Gillson)'.

<sup>247</sup> Robert Gillson Jr, the son of Peter Gillson, who is not included in this data set, did not seek the clerical support but believed religion assisted him in dealing with his father's loss.

narratives describing how family members and comrades dealt with their contentious issues. In addition, within the families, a hierarchy of grief emerged.

In the current context, closure is a state of mind reflecting the extent to which family members and comrades felt they had redressed the contentious issues arising from the loss and non-recovery of the Forgotten Six. Closure is a highly subjective, multi-faceted concept, which is person specific and temporally situated. Family members and comrades achieved closure through practical actions and cognitive processes, generally encased in high levels of emotionality.

The phenomenon of 'missing persons' often manifests in the civilian community. During the financial year 2005–06, Australian police received 35,000 reports of missing persons.<sup>248</sup> Only two per cent of these 35,000 remained missing beyond six months.<sup>249</sup> Seeking closure where a person goes missing is a very different experience to seeking closure in the presence of the body. First, the absence of the missing person or their body inhibits the understanding of the loss event. Relatives and friends can only ponder on the reasons for the disappearance and, if they suspect death has occurred they can only imagine how the missing person died. Second, even if the authorities issue a presumption of death, the body's absence inhibits closure. Bill Denny had extensive dealings with Michael Herbert's mother during 2000 to 2003 and succinctly summed up the dilemma faced by the survivors of missing persons:

Missing in action creates this terrible tearing within the fabric of your soul. You don't know: there's no closure. What do you do? Do you move on, or do you hold out hope? ... You know, we take it for granted, you die, hospital, car accident, whatever you like, [then you have a] funeral.<sup>250</sup>

Where persons go missing, not having a body and hence not having a funeral makes closure a vastly different experience to that which mourners usually face.

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<sup>248</sup> M. James, J. Anderson and J. Putt, 'Missing Persons in Australia: Research and Public Policy Series, No. 86', Canberra, ACT, Australian Institute of Criminology, 2008, p. xiv. Ninety per cent of these missing persons were located within seven days.

<sup>249</sup> M. Henderson and P. Henderson, 'Missing People: Issues for the Australian Community', Canberra, ACT, Commonwealth of Australia, 1998, as cited in James, Anderson and Putt, 'Missing Persons in Australia: Research and Public Policy Series, No. 86', p. xiv. Understandably, some of these persons or their bodies are never located, but not all of these individuals are dead.

<sup>250</sup> Denny, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Michael Herbert)'.

However, this study focuses on the six MIA cases from Vietnam—where six men presumably met violent deaths while serving overseas. In the case of these missing persons, the object of closure did not relate only to the men's death and the attendant grief. Some of the men's comrades focused on their direct participation in the loss events. Hence, closure in this context is again different to that normally experienced in the wider community.

Based on information available to them, family members and comrades progressively achieved levels of closure commensurate with their needs; however, achieving closure was not a universal requirement because some family members and some comrades simply did not see the men's loss as overly significant.<sup>251</sup> Nevertheless, even in the absence of the body and the lack of specific information about the loss, some achieved various levels of closure.<sup>252</sup>

The early states of closure that some individuals achieved were not necessarily stable. For example, Bill Denny reported a conversation with Shane Herbert, Michael Herbert's brother:

Dear old Shane ... I think ... he had certainly decided that moving on was the way to go ... and that he had to allow the scar to form and then new skin to grow over the wound ... it seemed that every time he wanted to do that ... some do-gooder would come along and rip the scab off and re-open the wound.<sup>253</sup>

In some cases, the contentious issues requiring redress did not emerge until later in life, often after retirement. Gordon Peterson, Parker's Acting Platoon Commander in November 1965 retired in 1997 and thereafter often reflected on the loss of Parker:

It was after I got out of the army that things started to ... get on my mind more so ... [and] toward the end, there wouldn't have been too many nights ... when I woke up in the middle of the night [that] I wasn't thinking about what I could've done.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> As mentioned earlier, Paul Gillespie, one of John Gillespie's younger brothers provided an example of a person who did not see the loss as overly significant.

<sup>252</sup> Gillespie family members provided examples of people who achieved a certain level of closure quickly, as discussed earlier.

<sup>253</sup> Denny, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Michael Herbert)'.

<sup>254</sup> Peterson left the Army in 1983. He joined OAH in early 2002, five years after he ceased full-time employment. Peterson, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Richard Parker)'.

Hence, the level and trajectory of closure varied between individuals, depending mainly on their emotional attachment to the men and the changes in their life courses, underpinned by their understandings of the loss incidents.

Individuals engaged in practical and cognitive processes to achieve various levels of closure. These processes consisted of accepting death, experiencing the absence of the body, defining expectations and allocating social spaces to the decedents. Figure 4–3 depicts these processes and their relationships. The term *Optimum Closure* describes the best possible level of closure available to family members and comrades.

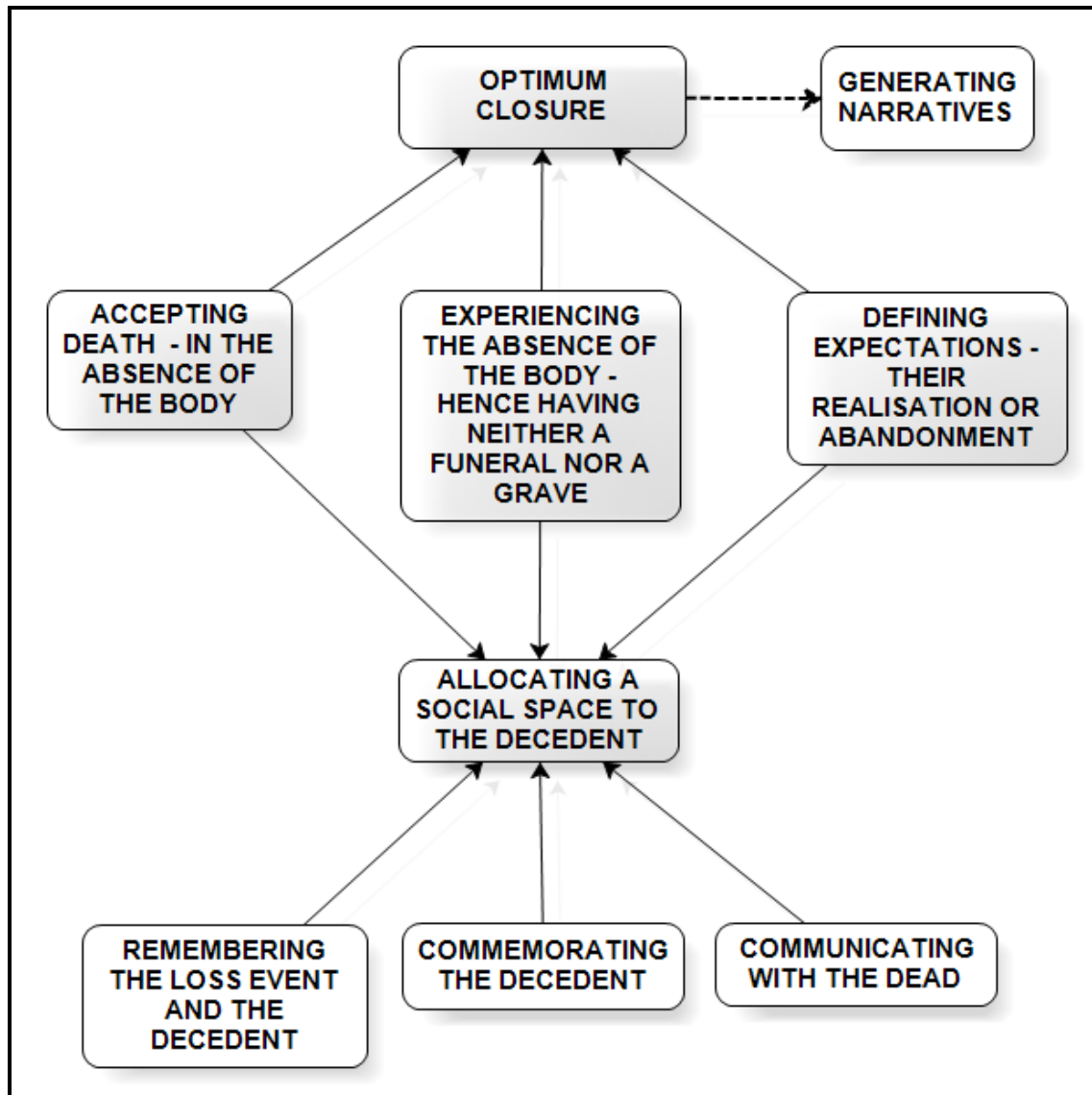
The acceptance of death is a solid stepping-stone on the path to closure.<sup>255</sup> By the mid-1980s, most family members and comrades consciously accepted the men were dead, but for some the absence of a body compromised this acceptance.<sup>256</sup> Some individuals needed more finality by the recovery of the body. For example, almost two-thirds of the participants in my study expressed a preference for having the body present. Bill Denny recalled his discussions with Herbert's mother in 2002: 'She said it was very interesting that there'd been, in a sense ... no closure ... simple, tangible things like no ceremony, no bloody funeral'.<sup>257</sup> In the main, most individuals recognised having a body confirmed death and the conduct of a funeral was an important further step toward achieving closure. Nevertheless, progressively and within their varying contexts, most family members and comrades did not expect recovery of the bodies of the Forgotten Six or their remains and this was directly associated to the capacity to achieve closure.

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<sup>255</sup> From the point of view of the family members and comrades, the understandings of the loss incidents and the level of bonding with the decedents drove the timing of the acceptance of death. In addition, the degree of religiosity of family members and comrades had little effect on the timing of acceptance of death, although it may have played some part in the MIA cases.

<sup>256</sup> The men's comrades were more inclined to consciously accept death than the family members. Presumptions of death were important. The receipt of the presumptions of death signaled to the family members that death had occurred and it was time to move on. The presumptions of the deaths of Herbert and Carver issued in 1975, almost five years after the loss event encouraged the conscious acceptance of death within these two families, especially by the two mothers.

<sup>257</sup> Denny, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Michael Herbert)'.

**Figure 4–3: Elements of Closure while 'Living with the Un-dead'**

The Forgotten Six occupied a physical and a psychological presence within their families before their deployment to Vietnam. In the case of their comrades, this duality of presence existed up until the men were lost and thereafter a state of disjunction existed. The men were physically absent but psychologically present and family members and comrades created social spaces to accommodate these phantoms, perhaps consciously, but more often than not unconsciously.<sup>258</sup> The notion of the social space is an important concept in explaining closure.

<sup>258</sup> The concept of the 'social space' derives in the main from the notions articulated by Sledge. Sledge, *Soldier Dead: How We Recover, Bury, and Honor Our Military Fallen*, pp. 21–3. Although allocating these social spaces might represent an action or a strategy in its own right,

(Continued)

Individual beliefs, including religiosity and cultural inheritances; ante-mortem relationship with the decedents; the happenings in the lives of family members and comrades, including their stage of psychosocial development determined the extent to which they developed these social spaces. Within these mental constructs and to deal with the cognitive dissonance associated with the ambiguities and ambivalences of dealing with the missing, family members and comrades maintained on-going relationships with the dead. Figure 4–3 (page 164) illustrates the processes contributing to the creation of the social spaces: remembering the loss event and the decedent, commemorating the decedent and communicating with the dead. Progressively, within the social spaces the bereaved re-engineered the social identities of their loved ones and comrades.

Open acknowledgement of the psychological presence of dead or missing comrades is not advocated among service personnel during military operations. Clive Williams, Gillson's Platoon Commander from 1965 revealed 'the person who was killed didn't get mentioned again ... once they were gone they were gone, and you moved on psychologically'.<sup>259</sup> Hence, the construction of social spaces by the men's comrades was necessarily more subdued, at least while on operations. Nevertheless, on return to Australia many comrades constructed extensive social spaces for the missing men.

Remembering is at the heart of the social space. For comrades, recollections of the loss events form part of this remembering—regardless of whether they had been directly involved in the traumatic event or not.

Remembering varies in frequency, daily, on anniversaries or on special occasions, to less frequently or not at all.<sup>260</sup> For example, in 2008 John Cuzens, a member of Fisher's patrol indicated 'there has not been a single day since, when he [Cuzens] has not thought of his fallen friend'.<sup>261</sup> Les Liddington, another member of

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because of the lack of intent on the part of family members and comrades, this process is considered an outcome.

<sup>259</sup> Williams, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Peter Gillson)'.

<sup>260</sup> Those who were directly involved in the loss incidents and/or who had close ties to the missing individual generally engaged in remembering more frequently.

<sup>261</sup> Australian Broadcasting Commission, 'Vietnam vet to bring last missing digger home', Australian Broadcasting Commission, <<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2008-09-30/vietnam-vet-to-bring-last-missing-digger-home/526776>>, accessed 8 June 2013; and, A. Ferguson, 'Homecoming: sad duty for SAS veteran', *Northern Daily Leader* (Tamworth), 1 Oct. 2008, pp. 1–2. Cuzens served in Vietnam with 2 SAS Squadron from 25 Nov. 1968 to 20 Feb. 1969 and with 3 SAS Squadron from 21 Feb. to 28 Nov.



Fisher's patrol, recalled 'on 27 September of each year [the day Fisher was lost] ... I give him a thought. ... It may sound a bit weird, but I do think those things, especially on that day'.<sup>262</sup> On the other hand, for *George*, a comrade of Herbert memories surfaced only 'if there was something on the news, generally around the Long Tan Day [Vietnam Veterans' Day] or something like that, but not as something that would spring to mind on a daily basis'.<sup>263</sup>

The tone of the memories was usually complimentary. For instance, Gillson's widow recalled her first husband saying, 'my husband died as a hero ... I [still] talk about him with pride ... and I have his photo around my home'.<sup>264</sup> Knowing the men died doing what they had chosen to do encouraged a sense of pride. However, in some instances, individuals recalled instances of conflict or characteristics of the decedents that were not the usual glowing recollections the living muster for the dead. Nevertheless, family members and comrades generally recalled such memories objectively and not with recrimination or malice.<sup>265</sup> However, with one of the missing, a number of individuals chose not to extend such a courtesy.<sup>266</sup>

Latent memories sometimes surfaced as dreams with unsavoury overtones. Robert Gillson Snr had such dreams about his brother.<sup>267</sup> Such intrusive manifestations were not conducive to engendering a comfortable social space.

During interactions between family members and comrades, some comrades took the opportunity to connect vicariously with the decedents through family members. For instance, Colin Butterworth, a comrade of Parker and Gillson recalled his first

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<sup>262</sup> Liddington, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally David Fisher)'.

<sup>263</sup> *George*, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam'.

<sup>264</sup> Easton, 'Having a husband (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

<sup>265</sup> Christine Gillespie, Gillespie's elder sister recalled, 'For me the death of John [and] other siblings and parents causes great pain. In John's case, I compare it to having a limb sawn off—I may not like that arm or feel an empathy with it, but it is gone; it was part of me and I suffer the loss'. Gillespie, 'Responses to questions raised by J. Bourke in relation to the Gillespie family'.

<sup>266</sup> This case will not be discussed further, to avoid any possible injury to the survivors.

<sup>267</sup> Robert Gillson Snr recollected, 'I always have dreams. ... I dreamt that he was captured and at one stage we were told anyone with tattoos, they made lampshades out of their skin, and he had ... a few tattoos and so I always had that fear'. Gillson Snr, 'Having a brother (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

meeting with Robert Gillson Jr in 1991, 'It was like looking at Peter [Gillson] when I saw him, except he was slightly balder'.<sup>268</sup>

Some family members hoped the living might emulate the dead and perpetuate their memory. For instance, in 1965 Lorraine Easton projected qualities of her late husband onto her son, 'I only hope that his son will grow up to be as fine a man as Peter was'.<sup>269</sup> The survivors sometimes went a step further and identified the living with the dead. Susanna Carver, the sister-in-law of Robert Carver reported:

I often ... thought that she [Carver's mother] thought of Adam [Susanna's son] as a reincarnation of Robert [Carver] ... that Adam wasn't his own person, that he was Robert as a little boy.<sup>270</sup>

The children who were too young at the time of the loss incident to have any personal memories of their fathers, relied on what others told them and on what they read or on memorabilia that offered a connection to their fathers.<sup>271</sup> These younger persons inherited their grief from older family members or associates and constructed social spaces accordingly.

Private and public commemorative activities, sustained remembering: 'Lest we Forget'. Private commemorations took various forms such as maintaining the decedent's room or displaying photographs of the men in happier times. Parker's sister, Pat Woodland recalled, 'I've got a photo at the doorway there ... and I've got more photos down there (pointing to another room) ... he was a fourteen-year-old boy the last time I saw him'.<sup>272</sup>

Another form of private commemoration was collecting memorabilia and keeping scrapbooks.<sup>273</sup> Some maintained personal 'shrines', by giving over parts of their houses to display memorabilia. Wendy Mudford, Parker's widow and Robert

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<sup>268</sup> Butterworth, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Richard Parker and Peter Gillson)'.

<sup>269</sup> L. Gillson, 'Reply to a Condolence Letter', [letter to Second Lieutenant C. O. G. Williams], 24 Nov. 1965, Fairfield, NSW.

<sup>270</sup> Carver, 'Having a brother-in-law (Robert Carver) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'.

<sup>271</sup> The children of Gillson and Gillespie are in this category along with Graig Hawes, the second son of Gillson's widow.

<sup>272</sup> Woodland, 'Having a brother (Richard Parker) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

<sup>273</sup> Gillson's widow recalled how her workmates helped her collect press cuttings. Easton, 'Having a husband (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

Carver's family provide examples of this type of 'commemoration'.<sup>274</sup> Some, such as Gavin O'Brien, a comrade of Gillespie preserved their memories of the men more overtly. In the early nineties, O'Brien erected a private memorial to Gillespie. The memorial stands in O'Brien's garden at the front of his house in Canberra, and consists of a small pond, a stone cairn, a plaque and a flagpole.<sup>275</sup> As mentioned earlier, Fisher and Carver's secondary schools established memorials to the two men and Fisher's old Rugby Club initiated a perpetual trophy in his memory.

The Welcome Home Parade of 1987 and the dedication in 1992 of the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial in Canberra, with the three benches carrying the names of the six MIAs are prime examples of public commemorations. Nevertheless, regardless of the number or nature of these memorials, some felt the substantive value of a memorial was reduced without the existence of a body. Carmel Hendrie reinforced the emptiness of memorials by recalling:

I spoke [with] Wendy [Mudford] ... and she said she had never visited Tiny's ... [memorial plaque]. I'd never been out to Springvale to see the [Gillespie] plaque in the 37 years—never, because there is nothing there.<sup>276</sup>

Such memorials were deficient when it came to establishing a tangible connections with the dead. Nevertheless, in the absence of the bodies and any graves memorials encouraged remembering and offered a focal point for grief.

Spiritualism as a movement may have declined in popularity after the Second World War but one of its tenets—communicating with the dead—survived at the

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<sup>274</sup> Trevor Hagan, a comrade of Parker recollected that in 2002 Parker's widow 'had a corner in her lounge room' with the Australian flag and 'all her photo albums ... and that was Tiny's corner'. Hagan, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Richard Parker)'. In the mid-1980s Syd Carver, Robert Carver's father reported, 'We've got a room, Robert's room; it's full of his clothes, full of everything that belonged to him. Now what are we going to do, we can't throw them away, you can't, they're his'. H. Piper, 'MIA: Missing-in-Action', Syd Carver, 56 min.

<sup>275</sup> O'Brien recalled, 'Fiona [Pike, Gillespie's daughter] came out here at the conclusion of the dedication of the Vietnam Vet's Memorial [in 1992]; she planted the tree in the front garden ... and I said to her, 'I'll erect a flag pole and we will always fly the flag in his memory and we've done that'. O'Brien, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally John Gillespie)'.

<sup>276</sup> Hendrie, 'Having a husband (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

personal level into the first decade of the twenty-first century.<sup>277</sup> Such paranormal experiences contribute to the development of the social spaces.

Visits to memorials provided an opportunity to communicate with the dead. By way of illustration, Carmel Hendrie endeavoured to connect with the missing men during her visits to the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial in Canberra. Hendrie recalled:

The few times we've been down there now, I've always made a point of going around to the whole six of them, just to say, "I hope everything's OK with you".<sup>278</sup>

Some felt they might communicate with the dead through letters. For example, in the late 1980s, when Fiona Pike was coming to grips with the *fact* her father was dead, she wrote him a letter, 'questioning what would've it been like if ... [she] didn't have to deal with what ... [she] was going through at that time'.<sup>279</sup>

In 1997, during an attempted visit to the Parker and Gillson loss incident site, Colin Butterworth, a comrade of Parker and Gillson had a 'vision' and reported he was able 'to see their faces [Parker and Gillson] ... one on top of the other; they just got further and further away and just disappeared'. Butterworth considered his vision as cathartic: 'I'd released that tension out of my system and I'd said farewell to them'. Furthermore, Butterworth opined it might not have mattered if the men remained in Vietnam, unrecovered.<sup>280</sup> The issue of whether the living genuinely believe they can communicate with the dead is irrelevant, as is the accuracy of the reports of such paranormal experiences. The over-riding issue is the *desire* of the living to be able to communicate with *the other side*, even if such communications take place only in the minds of the living.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> J. Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*, Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 76.

<sup>278</sup> Hendrie, 'Having a husband (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>279</sup> Pike, 'Having a father (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>280</sup> Butterworth, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Richard Parker and Peter Gillson)'; and, Butterworth, 'Vietnam revisited—1997'. It is interesting to note that Butterworth retired in 1991, so by 1997 he had lived through six unfettered years in which to reflect on the loss of Parker and Gilson.

<sup>281</sup> It is outside the scope of this study to establish the reasons for the emergence of this phenomenon—other than to note that engaging in communications with the dead represented an attempt by family members and comrades to maintain the bonds with the deceased.

Social spaces were sometimes antagonistic. For instance, Christine Gillespie acknowledges an element of 'conflict and a bit of drama' in the social space she allocated to her brother.<sup>282</sup> In some cases, comrades were unable to rationalise their involvement in the loss incident and found it difficult to develop a comfortable social space, thereby impeding closure. For example, John Bird found it difficult to achieve any degree of closure because of his survivor guilt.<sup>283</sup> Occasionally a sliver of cold fact would pierce the heart of the social space. How did he die? Did he suffer? What happened to the body? Progressively, most family members and comrades created social spaces for the men, although some were not entirely comfortable.

Hence, while 'living with the un-dead' family members and comrades progressively sought levels of closure commensurate with their needs. Those still alive in 2001 continued to endure the absence of the body and the lack of a funeral—impediments to closure. Without the recovery of the men's remains, the levels of closure achieved were incomplete and fragile. Under the circumstances, the prevalent desire of family members and comrades to maintain their bonds with the Forgotten Six was understandable. They were in a state of limbo and felt a need to remember, commemorate and in some cases, communicate with the missing.

One outcome during this period was the generation of narratives by family members and comrades, as reflected in Figure 4–3 (page 164). For some, particularly family members, their narratives focused on the grief occasioned by the men's loss: a grief narrative. For comrades, the foci of their stories were generally not the men's death per se, but rather their involvement in the death events. Such narratives provided a self-evaluation of past performance. Narratives were developmental, changing over time with the emergence of new information and with changes in the personal circumstances of the narrators, who structured their stories depending on their intentions and their audience.<sup>284</sup>

Family members and comrades did not set out consciously to create these narratives. However, they assembled, with varying degrees of rigour, the relevant

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<sup>282</sup> Christine Gillespie recalled, 'John has a psychic space in my mind that's very strong because I guess he and I sparked off each other so much in our childhood and adolescence that he was a very real presence in my life, and we had conflict and a bit of drama as well'. Gillespie, 'Having a brother (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>283</sup> Bird, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Michael Herbert and Robert Carver)'.

<sup>284</sup> Chase, 'Narrative inquiry: Multiple lenses, approaches, voices', p. 657.

components of their story, which allowed them to synthesise specific sub-narratives as required by calling forward memories, facts, feelings, beliefs and aspirations.<sup>285</sup> Such narratives were generally not fully developed, and often were limited to details of the complicating action (the loss of the men), an evaluation, (meaning and emotions) and usually some form of resolution (the outcome).<sup>286</sup>

These narratives provided the vehicles by which family members and comrades articulated to themselves, and sometimes to others, the stories of how they dealt with the men's loss over the years, effectively enshrining the narrators' contemporaneous states of closure and reflecting the social spaces they had created. Narratives often emerged during occasional discussions with family members and comrades, during engagement with the media and sometimes in letters.

Narratives helped create or sustain the identities of family members and comrades.<sup>287</sup> The three widows' narratives are particularly informative. Even after they formed new relationships, the widows did not abandon the memories of their former husbands. Regardless of their marital state, people often refer to these three women as 'the widow of ... [Parker, Gillson or Gillespie]', and they have not objected to being known as such: that is how they see themselves. Lorraine Easton, Gillson's widow suggested 'when you think of it, I will always be a war widow'.<sup>288</sup> The widows' narratives not only sustained their identity as war widows, but also reflected their on-going connections with their former husbands.

An interesting role that emerged within the families during this period was that of the 'central mourning figure', who was generally the person most affected by the loss. The central mourning figure carried the 'family' grief narrative. The emergence of this role reflected a hierarchy of grief within the families. The central mourning figure tended to be the NOK, but occasionally this was not the case. For example, Joan Herbert assumed the role of central mourning figure within months of the loss, if not sooner, even though Herbert's father was the NOK. In the cases of the unmarried men,

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<sup>285</sup> Other components that survivors might include in their grief narratives are memories of the decedent, details of notification of the loss, seeking further information regarding the loss incident, hearing about historical recovery attempts and a summary of the extant situation.

<sup>286</sup> Riessman, *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences*, p. 84. Riessman suggests a fully developed narrative contains six elements: an abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution and a coda.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>288</sup> Easton, 'Having a husband (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

Fisher, Herbert and Carver, their parents generally retained the role of central mourning figure until they died or became incapable, at which time one of the decedent's siblings took over the role. However, within Herbert's family his brother and his sister shared the mantle. For the three married men, the widows were the NOK and usually assumed the central mourning figure role.<sup>289</sup>

### **SUMMARY OF 'LIVING WITH THE UN-DEAD'**

This chapter has provided close-in descriptions of the experiences of some family members and comrades of the Forgotten Six from when the men were lost until the turn of the century. The following paragraphs summarise the discussion.

Understandably, the men's loss caused considerable angst to the members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades. That nobody could say definitely at least initially, whether the men were dead and the fact that neither the men nor their remains were recoverable, added further torment. Hence, the prospect of 'living with the un-dead' confronted family members and comrades. They subsequently contended with a number of factors beyond their control, principally erroneous media reports and with the Herbert and Carver families, inaccurate reporting by the authorities. Ambiguity prevailed. Nevertheless, family members and comrades had one simple objective and that was to get on with their lives with minimum interference, by redressing the practical and psychological issues surrounding the men's loss and non-recovery.

Some families, specifically those of Parker, Herbert and Gillespie lacked cohesion, which in turn inhibited effective interactions. Official interest in the six MIAs evaporated after 1984 and the authorities failed to engage effectively with the families. Hence, the bureaucracy possessed little understanding of the families' varying aspirations.

While in Vietnam, encased in the military's subculture of death denial within an andocentric environment, the men's comrades in contrast to family members back in Australia, had little say in how they dealt with the loss of the Forgotten Six. In this instance, there was no collapsing the binaries between home and front. However, most of the men's comrades adjusted well to life after their Vietnam experience, but the social stigma of the War lingered on for some. The Welcome Home Parade in Sydney

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<sup>289</sup> As discussed earlier, Gillespie's widow initially deflected the centrality of the family's mourning to Gillespie's parents.

in 1987 and the dedication of the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial in Canberra in 1992 were turning points for many of the men's comrades.

Initially there was limited contact between family members and comrades. However, the activities in 1987 and in 1992 redressed this lack of communication and the veteran community signalled they had not forgotten the six men and their families. Furthermore, searches in Vietnam by private individuals indicated concern for the Vietnam MIAs.

The principal emotions that emerged after the men's loss were grief and guilt. These emotions possessed separate foci: with grief, the men's loss per se and with guilt, the experiences around the loss incidents. With some of the comrades, bonding with the absent men induced feelings of guilt, even without direct involvement in the loss event. Along with the occasional flash of optimism, a number of negative emotions emerged, such as anger and rage.

Family members and comrades of the Forgotten Six generally accepted the death of individuals declared as KIA more readily than those declared MIA, with family members being more likely to delay the acceptance of death than were the comrades. Religiosity had no effect on the timing of the acceptance of death in KIA cases. In MIA cases, although religiosity may have influenced the family members to delay acceptance, it is not possible to determine the precise impact of religion because of other factors such as the depth of familial bonding and the level of understanding of the loss incidents. Religiosity did not inhibit the acceptance of death by the comrades in MIA cases. Most family members and comrades accepted death by the mid-1980s, but the whereabouts of the men's remains and the forensic matters surrounding the death events remained unclear.

Almost two-thirds of those studied expressed a preference for having the body present and although higher levels of religiosity may have encouraged such a preference, due to inconclusive evidence this study makes no definitive claim in this regard. Overall, religion was not widely used as a supporting strategy, but those who employed religion, mostly family members, generally benefited.

Family members and comrades of the Forgotten Six, while 'living with the un-dead', progressively sought levels of closure commensurate with their needs, although some simply preferred to put the matter behind them. However, the men's fates were unknown, they had not had a proper funeral and without the recovery of their remains, these levels of closure were incomplete and fragile. Some family members and comrades invested considerable mental, physical and emotional energy into the creation of social spaces to maintain connections to the absent men.



After the men's loss, a hierarchy of grief became apparent within the families and the role of central mourning figure emerged. Family members and comrades of the Forgotten Six assembled the components of narratives around the men's loss to explain how they dealt with their contentious issues.

In 2001, over three-quarters of the original primary bereaved were still alive, including Fisher's stepmother and Herbert's parents. Most family members and comrades progressively lost faith in the Government and the ADF and held little or no hope that action would be taken to recover the men. Nobody was in the least prepared for what was about to unfold over the next eight years.

## **CHAPTER 5: 'ATTENDING TO UNFINISHED BUSINESS'**

### ***INTRODUCTION***

At the turn of the century, to some of the members of the families of the Forgotten Six and the occasional veteran, the non-recovery of the six MIAs from Vietnam represented 'unfinished business'. Because of a combination of events in 2002, OAH emerged to attend to this unfinished business and in April 2007, OAH triumphantly recovered the remains of two of the Forgotten Six. This success sparked interest in the remaining cases and by July 2009, through the cooperative efforts of the Australian Government, the ADF and OAH searchers recovered the remains of the other four men. The Vietnamese Government and a number of Vietnamese citizens supported these recovery efforts.

This chapter examines the lobbying and investigative activities of OAH from 2002 to 2009 and the impact of such activities on those close to the Forgotten Six and on the Government and the ADF. Furthermore, the discussion illuminates the reasons why it took 36 years or more to bring the Forgotten Six home to Australia.

### ***INCIDENTAL CAUSATION: IGNITING THE FLAME***

The late 1990s began with my investigating the non-recovery of the body of a US Special Forces soldier, Sergeant First Class Anastacio Montez, KIA in Vietnam on 24 May 1968.<sup>1</sup> In early 2002, staff at the US Army CILHI suggested the identification of American MIAs would benefit by excluding the possibility of any Australians being among the hundred or so sets of remains the US agencies had recovered from Vietnam. To complete this task, CILHI needed Family Reference Samples (FRS) from suitable members of the families of the six Australian–Vietnam MIAs, for mitochondrial DNA analysis. In January 2002, Dr Mark Leney, the CILHI DNA Manager, requested the assistance of Central Army Records Office (CARO) and RAAF Records to locate suitable donors for the required FRS.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I served with Montez in late 1968 while I was attached to the 5<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group, operating out of Pleiku. I knew Montez had been killed but until 1997, I was unaware his remains had not been recovered.

<sup>2</sup> M. Leney, 'A request for information concerning the four Australian Army MIA from Vietnam', [letter to D. Gibson], 18 Jan. 2002, Hickham, HI; and, M. Leney, 'A request for information concerning the two RAAF MIA from Vietnam', [letter to D. Pullen], 18 Jan. 2002, Hickham, HI. Mark Leney was born in Derbyshire, UK. He completed his PhD in Biological Anthropology at

However, in February 2002 RAAF rejected Leney's request.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, in April the Acting Head of the Defence Personnel Executive advised CILHI the ADF 'would only consider requests to assist in the collection of DNA samples on a case by case basis'.<sup>4</sup> 'I was indignant ... annoyed and embarrassed that our Government couldn't help recover our men' and offered to locate suitable donors to obtain the necessary FRS for CILHI.<sup>5</sup> Hence, there was a need to investigate the cases of the Forgotten Six.

Therefore, in early 2002 my eldest son Anthony and I commenced a project, which we christened 'Operation Aussies Home'. OAH resulted because of the loss of Anastacio Montez and the ADF's recalcitrant attitude and was therefore a case of incidental causation. Furthermore, the conditions at the time favoured OAH and provided sufficient traction to ensure success.

### ***BACKGROUND: ATTITUDES OF THE MAIN PLAYERS***

The families' attitudes necessarily influenced my actions and the subsequent interactions between the families, OAH with the authorities. In 2002, most family members accepted the men were dead. However, one or two of them still hoped the men might one-day 'walk through the door'. Some felt further investigation of their cases might enhance their extant levels of closure but others were not interested in reopening their cases. Most family members held little or no hope of anybody taking action to determine the men's fate, or to recover their remains.

#### ***'Interfering men with problems'***

In 2002, Carmel Hendrie, Gillespie's widow categorically rejected the idea of having her husband's case investigated:

Jim Bourke rang me [in 2002]. He tried to tell me what he thought he was doing to try and get these six missing men home. ... I hung up on him. I just said I don't need this

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the University of Cambridge in 1996 and was a Junior Research Fellow at the University of Oxford from 1996 to 1999. Dr Leney worked at CILHI from 2001 to 2007.

<sup>3</sup> G. G. MacDonald, 'Herbert and Carver and support to CILHI', [undated letter to David J. Pagano], Feb. 2002, Canberra, ACT.

<sup>4</sup> B. Sargeant, 'Collection of reference samples from families of Australian MIA personnel for mtDNA analysis', [letter to Mark Leney], 16 Apr. 2002, Canberra, ACT.

<sup>5</sup> J. Bourke, 'Operation Aussies Home and the recovery of the Australian MIAs from Vietnam', [Interviewed by R. Chauvel], 19 July 2011, Footscray Park, Vic. Although the Americans stated they wanted to 'exclude' any Australian remains being among those held by CILHI, the underlying possibility of identifying Australian remains existed.

anymore. ... I want to get on with my life. I don't need it dredged up again ... leave us alone.<sup>6</sup>

Similarly, Gillespie's sister, Christine Gillespie, observed:

When I heard that the vets were out looking for these MIAs, it felt to me that they were interfering men with problems. I couldn't understand why these veterans were more or less digging up the past and disturbing whatever the families were feeling and whatever they might have come to terms [with].<sup>7</sup>

### **'Backyard Mechanics'**

In 2002, Shane Herbert, Michael Herbert's brother was not receptive to the idea of a non-government body initiating a search for his brother:

You [Jim Bourke] rang and spoke to me about a DNA sample and my recollections were that this matter was so sensitive. ... I was reluctant to provide any information. ... They [OAH] were like backyard mechanics.<sup>8</sup>

Shane Herbert was conscious of the effects of reopening his brother's case: 'I knew that ... an incomplete mission would have very, very deep implications on the health of my father and ... any further searches'.<sup>9</sup>

In late 2002 David Fisher's sister, Ann Cowdroy was not interested in reactivating her brother's case. OAH did not pursue the matter, particularly following the tragic death of Cowdroy's son, Michael, on 6 October 2003 after a horrific car crash in western New South Wales.<sup>10</sup>

The men's comrades felt nobody was about to do anything to investigate the cases of the Forgotten Six and for some this 'unfinished business' weighed heavily on their minds. However, for various reasons a minority of veterans believed nobody should take further action regarding some of the MIAs. In early 2002, Len Opie heard about OAH's interest in the Gillespie case and forwarded a complaint about OAH to

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<sup>6</sup> Hawkins, 'Behind Enemy Lines: Part 2', Carmel Hendrie, 14 min.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., Christine Gillespie, 3 min.

<sup>8</sup> Herbert, 'Having a brother (Michael Herbert) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. In 2006, Susanna Carver, the sister-in-law of Robert Carver expressed her opinion about the possible recovery of her brother-in-law, 'I wouldn't think many people held out much hope of a conclusion, really'. Carver, 'Having a brother-in-law (Robert Carver) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'.

<sup>10</sup> C. Byrnes, 'A sad loss', *Country Music Capital News*, Rural Press, Tamworth, NSW, <[http://www.capitalnews.com.au/editorial.asp?editorial\\_id=405&issue=49](http://www.capitalnews.com.au/editorial.asp?editorial_id=405&issue=49)>, accessed 16 Aug. 2010.

John Spencer, Executive Director of the of the South Australian branch of the RSL.<sup>11</sup> Also in 2002 another veteran, Gordon Angus Mackinlay protested that any suggestion that remains of Gillespie could be recovered would 'give the remaining family of John Gillespie totally false hope'.<sup>12</sup> A few other veterans quietly opposed investigation of one or more cases and considered the chances of success to be limited or non-existent. However, these views and opinions were largely emotional and often not grounded in fact.

During 2002 to 2005, the Government, the ADF and ex-service organisations (ESO) effectively avoided the issue of the Vietnam MIAs by forming an unholy alliance aimed at thwarting investigations. Members of this trinity fed off one another. The ADF provided advice supporting the view that investigative action was not required. The Government confirmed that a no-action policy satisfied the political agenda and the RSL and other ESOs supported the official stance. The attitudes of these institutions effectively stymied official progress toward the return of the Forgotten Six. The Government and the ADF legitimised their inaction by falling back on their policy on the recovery of remains of MIA personnel.<sup>13</sup> Although the policy did not require the families' approval to initiate investigative and/or recovery action, the authorities hid behind family skirts and coat tails, bowing to the families' stated or assumed positions.<sup>14</sup>

Meanwhile, Peter Aylett, who would become a staunch supporter of OAH, discovered the Gillespie crash site in February 2004.<sup>15</sup> The site was located at GR YS

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<sup>11</sup> Lenard (Len) Murray Opie (1923–2008) served in PNG during 1943 and 1944 and subsequently served in Korea and Vietnam. Opie was not directly involved in the Gillespie loss incident but monitored the related radio traffic. Opie assisted with the identification of the body of Corporal Blackhurst, who was also killed in the Gillespie incident.

<sup>12</sup> G. A. Mackinlay, 'The Gillespie case and an alleged visit to the crash site on 22 June 1971', [e-mail to J. Bourke], 25 Mar. 2002, Sydney, NSW. Mackinlay claimed to have visited the Gillespie crash site on 22 June 1971; however, he arrived in Vietnam less than a week earlier, on 16 June. It is unlikely Mackinlay would have been involved in any such expedition only six days after arrival in country. Mackinlay was not a combat soldier. He was a clerk on the HQ of 8 Field Ambulance, Gillespie's old unit.

<sup>13</sup> Department of Defence, 'Defence Instruction (General) PERS 20-4: Missing-in-Action Presumed Killed: Recovery of Human Remains of Australian Defence Force Members'.

<sup>14</sup> Only in one instance did the extant policy mention 'families', and this mention related to 'Attendance of Next-of-Kin at Funeral Service [sic]'. Ibid., para. 18.

<sup>15</sup> Aylett served in Vietnam with 17 Construction Squadron from 12 May 1967 to 10 Sept. 1968, and with AATTV from 3 Sept. 1970 to 2 Sept. 1971. Aylett was not involved in any of the loss incidents, but his friend Corporal Tom Blackhurst died in the Gillespie incident. Aylett offered his assistance to OAH in 2003. He acted as the OAH navigator and provided basic field engineering support during all OAH in-country investigations (Nov. 2005, May 2006, Nov. 2006, Jan.–Feb. 2007 and Mar.–Apr. 2007). Aylett was a member of the Government Team that

(Continued)

47601 5088, approximately 180 metres north of the officially recorded location.<sup>16</sup> We confirmed the site with the assistance of CILHI staff, based mainly on artefacts recovered by Aylett. Nonetheless, the ADF deemed this evidence insufficient to meet their policy requirements and the authorities chose not to act, citing the family's reticent attitude as justification.

It is widely believed that ministers run their departments—they are certainly responsible for them and within a democratic system, they are accountable. However, ministers need detail to support their arguments and sufficient time to consider the issues at-hand. They necessarily place considerable reliance on advice tendered by their staff, in this case the officers from the Service HQs. Effective departments are run by ministers with the courage to question advice and recommendations and, when necessary, to call their advisors to account. Within the cozy symbiotic relationship between the Government and the ADF from 2002 to 2005, there was little need for ministers to be courageous. A common purpose supported a strong alliance between the Government, the ADF and the ESO and while this triad remained ascendant, official support to deal with the 'unfinished business' from the Vietnam War could not and would not materialise.

The Australian authorities thought the Americans might recover the Australian MIAs from Vietnam and used this false premise as a plank in their argument for not needing to use Australian resources. The ADF previously cooperated with the Americans but these activities were not fruitful.<sup>17</sup> In early 2002, despite rejecting Leney's request for assistance, the RAAF stated they would 'assist CILHI wherever possible in its mission and continue to build on the relationship established at the conference in Port Moresby last year [2001]'.<sup>18</sup> However, RAAF support did not extend

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excavated the Gillespie site in Nov. 2007, and represented OAH and the families as a member of the RAAF Excavation Team that recovered Herbert and Carver in 2009.

<sup>16</sup> AMS (VP) US Army, 'Map, Vietnam, Dat Do, Series L7014, Sheet 6429 I, 1:50,000', 1966.

<sup>17</sup> In 1982, the Americans requested 'physical and dental descriptions/X-rays and/or a good facial photograph' of the six men and these records were provided by the Australian authorities. J. E. Gleason, 'Personnel still unaccounted for in Southeast Asia', [letter to the Australian Embassy Washington], 12 Mar. 1982, Alexandria, VA. In 1995, Group Captain Griffiths visited CILHI. At that stage CILHI was holding remains that were possibly Caucasian and suggested some 'may be the remains of Australian soldiers and airmen lost during the Vietnam War. They offered to attempt to match these remains to the dental records of [missing] Australian servicemen'. G. D. Moller, 'Members missing-in-action in the Vietnam War', [letter to the Deputy Chief of Air Staff], 5 Oct. 1995, Canberra, ACT. The ADF provided the requested medical and dental records to CILHI but the US agencies were unable to identify any Australians among the remains.

<sup>18</sup> MacDonald, 'Herbert and Carver and support to CILHI'.

beyond an inexpensive *relationship*. Investigations and associated fieldwork are essential in obtaining remains for analysis and such activities require resources. Australian support for such ventures was important given that US recovery efforts understandably focused on missing Americans, as Defense POW/MIA Office pointed out:

[Although the US would make] every effort to recover foreign nationals who were lost fighting side-by-side with Americans and return their remains to their respective countries ... accounting for missing Americans [was the top priority].<sup>19</sup>

During 2002 to 2004, Australian authorities used a smokescreen to hide their inaction. Anecdotal evidence suggested a Memorandum of Understanding existed between Australia and the US regarding searching for and recovering Australia's MIAs from Vietnam. However, despite a concerted effort the document was not located.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, it was not surprising that in 2004 the Government admitted 'Defence has no formal agreement with the US Joint Prisoner of War/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) concerning the search for the six Australian MIAs'.<sup>21</sup>

In reality, cooperation between Australian and American authorities was virtually non-existent and therefore the reliance upon the Americans to recover the Forgotten Six was at best misguided. Nonetheless and incidentally, the investigation of the Montez case and helping to locate various persons of interest to the American MIA agencies led to those agencies providing information on the Forgotten Six to OAH, without OAH having to resort to FOI as was sometimes necessary when dealing with Australian authorities.

Until late 2006 when they became involved in investigations in Vietnam, the ADF had little or no appreciation of the in-country factors that might affect the recovery of remains. The families also lacked information required to make informed decisions. Initially it was a case of the blind leading the blind. Furthermore, there were insufficient resources available to investigate and manage Australian MIA cases.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> C. Henley, 'Recovery of American and Australian MIA from Vietnam', [letter to J. Bourke], 23 Apr. 2002, Washington, DC.

<sup>20</sup> J. Bourke, 'Operation Aussies Home: Cooperation', [facsimile to Benjamin Hayes], 23 Sept. 2002, Wantirna South, Vic.

<sup>21</sup> F. Bailey, 'The search for the remains of Australian Defence Force Personnel missing-in-action in Vietnam', [letter to Robert Gillson Jr], 5 Aug. 2004, Canberra, ACT.

<sup>22</sup> The Deputy Chiefs of the Services were responsible for MIA investigations but had no staff dedicated to this function. When a capability was required, the investigating authority seconded personnel from other areas. In the case of Army, until mid-2010, the Army History Unit

## **EXTERNAL FACTORS**

While the predominant source of action stemmed directly from the activities of OAH, other events occurred because of the Project's growing profile and appeal. For example, in April 2003 I received an e-mail from the US JTF–FA advising one of their analysts had identified a Vietnamese person, Mr Tam Quyet with potentially valuable information about Parker and Gillson. Tam had knowledge of what he thought were two Americans killed and buried in November 1965 near Bien Hoa.<sup>23</sup> OAH forwarded this information to Army Headquarters but they did not respond.

Progressively, OAH needed funds to develop operations and a number of unexpected funding sources emerged. In early 2006, a 'white knight' appeared in the form of Queensland businessman Paul Darrouzet, with a no-strings-attached donation of \$40,000.<sup>24</sup> Indicative of the support for the OAH Project from within the community, other donors emerged in 2006 and included an anonymous person from Bamaga, Cape York with \$2,000 and a pensioner from South Australia who donated \$1,000.

## **ACTIONS/INTERACTIONS**

Although the Project's aim remained the same throughout, the project plan developed iteratively—from initially seeking support from the Australian and/or US agencies; to OAH carrying out in-country work; and, to the final stage where OAH lobbied for ADF involvement regarding the two RAAF members of the Forgotten Six.

Anthony and I set up a website on 15 February 2002 to collect and share information, and to lobby decision makers who might 'be able to assist in achieving a

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undertook the bulk of this work. Within the RAAF, HQ staff officers coordinated and often carried out work associated with their MIA cases. During 1900s the RAAF relied on the 'ADF Forensic Recovery Team', which consisted of 'both permanent RAAF personnel and forensic specialists from the RAAF Specialist Reserve', assembled on an as required basis. Griffiths and Duflou, 'Recovery of Australian service personnel missing-in-action from World War II: The work of the ADF forensic recovery team'. Both Services sometimes drew on civilians to supplement their work force for specific tasks.

<sup>23</sup> R. Hites, 'Possible witness: Mr Tam Quyet', [e-mail to J. Bourke], 18 Apr. 2003, Hickham, HI. Tam Quyet was the nom de guerre of Mr Huynh Van Tam. Tam was a 'combat operations officer for Military Region T1 from 1967 to October 1970'. Military Region T1 encompassed Bien Hoa and the Parker and Gillson loss incident site.

<sup>24</sup> I. McPhedran, 'Vets come home', *Hobart Mercury*, 9 June 2007 p. 24; and, I. McPhedran, 'Mission accomplished as diggers come home', *Herald Sun* (Melbourne), 9 June 2007, p. 100. Darrouzet was Chairman of Foxleigh Mining Pty Ltd, General Manager of Australian Bulk Minerals and Group Manager HR for Thiess Contractors Pty Ltd. Darrouzet has an active interest in medical research and social responsibility.



favourable and honourable outcome' regarding the Forgotten Six.<sup>25</sup> Specifically, the stated aim of OAH was:

To fully account for those Australian servicemen who were either Killed-in-Action or went Missing-in-Action, presumed dead, and whose bodies had not been recovered during the Vietnam War, 1962 to 1972, or subsequently.<sup>26</sup>

'Full Accounting', a term borrowed from the vocabulary of the US MIA agencies requires the attainment of one of the following outcomes, first, the recovery of identifiable remains, or second, the provision of sustainable and convincing evidence that the recovery of such remains is not possible.<sup>27</sup>

Initially, Anthony and I formed the nucleus of the OAH Project.<sup>28</sup> To achieve the Project's goals, we needed to recruit specialists including a solicitor; a media advisor; persons with current Vietnam-specific knowledge; a forensic expert; a RAAF aviator; and a mapmaker/navigator. Between 2002 and 2008, the Project quickly took on a life of its own and interested and relevant parties progressively volunteered their services. Raymond Latimer, a Sydney based solicitor offered his services.<sup>29</sup> Another volunteer, Walter Pearson was a Vietnamese linguist who travelled to Vietnam frequently.<sup>30</sup> David Thomas joined OAH to provide forensic and sub-surface search advice.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> J. Bourke and A. Bourke, 'The Aim of Operation Aussies Home as stated in February 2002', Operation Aussies Home, Wantirna, Vic., Internet Archive's Wayback Machine, <<http://replay.web.archive.org/20040812113909/http://austmia.com/Aim.htm>>, accessed 30 Apr. 2011.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. I set the date of '1972' as the War's end on the basis that all Australian ground troops, at least the ones with search and recovery capabilities, were withdrawn in that year.

<sup>27</sup> In due course, I explained the concept of full accounting to the families. Effectively 'full accounting' was a 'win-win' situation. Provided a trusted agency diligently investigated a case, full accounting could be achieved even if remains were not recovered.

<sup>28</sup> Anthony assisted by providing IT support to the Project; by acting as the OAH 'driver' and performing the duties of Treasurer for the Association after its incorporation in Sept. 2005. Anthony attended the reception ceremonies and the funerals of all six men.

<sup>29</sup> Latimer was not a veteran but joined the Army Reserve in 2008 as an Officer Cadet and received a commission as a Captain in the Australian Army Legal Corps in Aug. 2011. Latimer acted pro bono as the OAH Solicitor from 2003 onwards and took part in in-country investigations in May 2006, Jan.–Feb. 2007 and Mar.–Apr. 2007.

<sup>30</sup> Pearson served in Vietnam with 1<sup>st</sup> Field Regiment (Royal Australian Artillery) from 11 Mar. to 30 June 1969, and with the Australian Army Assistance Group Vietnam from 19 Mar. to 18 Dec. 1972. Pearson was not involved in any of the loss incidents. During the OAH in-country investigations (Nov. 2005, May 2006, Nov. 2006, Jan.–Feb. 2007 and Mar.–Apr. 2007) Pearson acted as an interpreter for OAH, advised on media matters and was responsible for in-country administration to support the OAH Team.

<sup>31</sup> Thomas was not a veteran but was a long-serving member of the Army Reserve, attaining the rank of Major. Thomas participated in OAH in-country investigations May 2006, Jan.–Feb. 2007 and Mar.–Apr. 2007. Thomas supervised the initial Parker and Gillson excavation conducted by

(Continued)

The initial task centred on rationalizing the Project's aims and objectives by developing an understanding of the six cases. Therefore, I conducted archival searches of Australian and American repositories related to the cases of the Forgotten Six, and also located potential witnesses. The witnesses were interviewed and their statements recorded. Based on this research, during 2002 to 2004 I compiled reports on the cases of the four Army members of the Forgotten Six, and forwarded copies to the relevant Government ministers, the US agencies in Hawaii and Army HQ.<sup>32</sup>

OAH team members did not ever consider any of the men were alive but there was the strong belief within OAH that the Forgotten Six must be found and their remains recovered. To begin with, there was the naive expectation that all families would appreciate the recovery of their loved one's remains; however, this assumption was initially false, notably with the Gillespie, Herbert and Fisher families. In early 2002, I approached the six families and offered assistance to account for their lost loved ones. The Parker, Gillson and Carver families accepted the offer and subsequently authorised OAH to deal with the Australian and American authorities regarding their missing relatives. However, the Gillespie, Herbert and Fisher families rejected the OAH offer, as discussed earlier.<sup>33</sup>

The general feeling among members of OAH was there was a good chance of locating remains of some members of the Forgotten Six. A minority were less optimistic and perhaps more realistic. Clive Williams, Gillson's Platoon Commander from 1965 estimated the chances of locating Parker and Gillson at 'about one in ten because ... the area had been redeveloped'.<sup>34</sup> Williams felt 'it would be very much like looking for a

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OAH in Apr. 2007, and subsequently took part in the Gillespie site excavation as a member of the Government Team in Nov. 2007.

<sup>32</sup> Reports on the Army members of the Forgotten Six were produced as follows: Gillespie (Issue 1, Dec. 2002 and Issue 2, Sept. 2003); Fisher (Oct. 2003); and, Parker and Gillson (Mar. 2004). I carried out the bulk of the research into the Herbert and Carver cases during 2002 to 2004 but did not finalise the report on these two cases until Sept. 2008.

<sup>33</sup> Peter Aylett believed recovery of the men's remains was morally justified. However, he reconsidered his position after meeting the Gillespie family in Perth in Aug. 2006, and listening to what they wanted done. Aylett later said, 'seeing the reaction of the Gillespie ladies ... there were quite a few hours over the next month that I ... did quite a lot of mind searching'. P. Aylett, 'Involvement with Operation Aussies Home and the recovery of Australian MIAs from Vietnam', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], 4 July 2010, Cashmere, Qld.

<sup>34</sup> Williams was a member of the Intelligence Corps during his military career. After leaving the Army, he pursued a career in Defence Intelligence from 1981 to 2002, and during 1993 and 1994, he was Head of the (Defence) Imagery Exploitation Centre. Hence, Williams was in a strong position to assess the feasibility of recoveries being actualised. Williams travelled to Vietnam with OAH in May 2006 to assist with investigation of the Parker and Gillson cases.

needle in a haystack'.<sup>35</sup> However, in a determined response Gordon Peterson, Parker's Acting Platoon Commander in November 1965 pragmatically opined, 'there's only one way of finding out and that's [to] see if we can find them'.<sup>36</sup>

While research and report writing were necessary, in order to grow in momentum and strength the Project needed public exposure and public support. Consequently, OAH engaged the media in 2002 to inform the public regarding the Forgotten Six. The media strategy commenced with the written press, radio and then TV. The strategy was effective and not only attracted support but also enabled OAH to pressure the Government to act at critical times.<sup>37</sup>

Over the years from 2002 to 2009, there were numerous meetings and volumes of correspondence with politicians and ADF officers. However, a major obstacle to progress was the continual change in Ministers responsible for MIA matters. Seven different ministers oversaw MIA matters from 2002 to 2009.<sup>38</sup>

Lobbying the authorities began in earnest in February 2002 with a letter to the Chief of the Defence Force, General Peter Gosgrove.<sup>39</sup> Cosgrove replied, 'Headquarters Australian Defence Force (HQ ADF) has maintained a policy that it will investigate all reports relating to the six MIAs'.<sup>40</sup> What followed was a 'honeymoon period'. Three officers travelled to Melbourne in June 2002 to discuss the Project; Defence funded two trips to Canberra in August and September for OAH, enabling me to meet a panel of authors and archivists and to carry out research. The honeymoon

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<sup>35</sup> Williams, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Peter Gillson)'.

<sup>36</sup> Peterson, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Richard Parker)'.

<sup>37</sup> Often, after 2005, it was not necessary to 'go public' since a call to the minister's office by a sympathetic journalist was repeatedly sufficient to elicit the desired response. In Oct. 2007 two episodes of *Australian Story* produced by the ABC, provided excellent exposure for OAH. Hawkins, 'Behind Enemy Lines: Part 1'; and, Hawkins, 'Behind Enemy Lines: Part 2'.

<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, the employment policies within Army and RAAF generally required officers to be re-posted every two or three years, further compounding the lack of continuity of negotiations.

<sup>39</sup> Peter John Cosgrove served in Vietnam with the 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Reinforcement Unit from 2 to 19 Aug. 1969; 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion Royal Australian Regiment from 20 Aug. to 28 Sept. 1969; and, HQ 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Task Force from 29 Sept. 1969 to 30 July 1970. General Cosgrove was the Chief of the Defence Force from July 2002 to July 2005 when he retired. Cosgrove became Governor General of Australia on 28 Mar. 2014 and, by virtue of this appointment became the first Knight of the Order of Australia in 30 years.

<sup>40</sup> P. Cosgrove, 'Australian Defence Force personnel listed as missing-in-action in Vietnam', [letter to J. Bourke], 21 Mar. 2002, Canberra, ACT.

nonetheless was short-lived and effectively ended in September 2002.<sup>41</sup> While polite, the reactions from the Army to the OAH Project turned negative.<sup>42</sup>

The attitudes and responses of other organisations reflected a lack of official support for the Project. I approached General Peter Phillips, National President of the RSL in March 2002 with a request for advice on RSL's policy on accounting for the Vietnam MIAs.<sup>43</sup> In response, the National Executive 'decided to take no action in this matter', having taken advice from 'the previous Australian Defence Attaché in Hanoi, Colonel Garry Hogan, and the Director of the Office of Australian War Graves, Air Vice Marshal Gary Beck (Ret'd)'.<sup>44</sup> Beck then wrote to the President of the New South Wales Branch of the RSL on 11 April 2002:

I urge you to dissuade Mr Burke [sic] from such a campaign by assuring him that the effort undertaken by the Americans on our behalf far exceeds that which we could accomplish independently.<sup>45</sup>

The phantom Memorandum of Understanding was lurking in the background.

In early November 2003, the authorities needlessly approached some if not all of the families of the Forgotten Six regarding the provision of FRS.<sup>46</sup> Minister Brough responded to unilateral media pressure by instructing that the six families be 'asked if they want to provide DNA samples'.<sup>47</sup> 'According to Defence they declined to give samples'.<sup>48</sup> Kerryn Herbert, Michael Herbert's sister told the *Herald Sun* (Melbourne), 'I

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<sup>41</sup> Bourke, 'Operation Aussies Home: Cooperation'.

<sup>42</sup> Army thanked me for the reports I provided, which was more than RAAF could do in 2008. A. C. Dangar, 'Army sponsored search of the crash site where Lance Corporal Gillespie died', [letter to J. Bourke], 2 June 2003, Canberra, ACT.

<sup>43</sup> J. Bourke, 'The position of the RSL regarding full accounting for the six MIA from the Vietnam War', [facsimile to Peter Phillips], 11 Apr. 2002, Wantirna South, Vic.

<sup>44</sup> P. R. Phillips, 'Inability to support Operation Aussies Home project', [letter to J. Bourke], 7 June 2002, Canberra, ACT.

<sup>45</sup> G. Beck, 'The current situation in relation to those Australian servicemen still missing in Vietnam', [letter to G.E. Priest], 11 Apr. 2002, Woden, ACT.

<sup>46</sup> N. Papps, 'Australia refuses to hand over DNA to identify soldiers' remains', *Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), 3 Nov. 2003, p. 3; and, N. Papps, 'Government flips on lost soldier search', *Herald Sun* (Melbourne), 5 Nov. 2003, p. 12. I had already arranged for families who were interested to provide FRS to the US agencies.

<sup>47</sup> Papps, 'Government flips on lost soldier search'. Brough was Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence from 7 Oct. 2003 to 18 July 2007.

<sup>48</sup> N. Papps, 'US search for lost digger', *Herald Sun* (Melbourne), 27 Mar. 2004, p. 15.

was not contacted by the ADF'.<sup>49</sup> The *Herald Sun* went on to report, 'at least one relative of a missing soldier gave DNA to JPAC via Jim Bourke and his group'.<sup>50</sup> This exercise sent mixed messages to the families.<sup>51</sup>

On 10 November 2003, I wrote to Minister Brough and formally complained about the failure of the Department of Defence, specifically Army HQ to investigate the Gillespie case.<sup>52</sup> Mr Brough responded on 11 February 2004 but unfortunately did not attend to the elements of my complaint.<sup>53</sup> There was a sense of antagonism, which persisted for the next three years.

Nonetheless, encouraged by OAH, there was a push from some members of the families of the Forgotten Six to investigate the whereabouts of their loved ones. In 2004 Parker's sister, Pat Woodland and 31 concerned citizens, mainly men who served with Parker and Gillson in 1965 and members of Gillson's family petitioned the Government to engage the services of JPAC to investigate the Parker and Gillson cases.<sup>54</sup> In 2005, nine hundred citizens signed an electronic petition requesting JPAC be engaged 'to carry out further in-country work [regarding the Forgotten Six] in conjunction the government of Viet Nam'.<sup>55</sup> However, these petitions failed to instigate authoritative action. Although the bureaucracy used the Gillespie family's reticent attitude as justification for not investigating their case, the authorities were not prepared to act even when members of the families of Parker and Gillson requested support. Nevertheless, the petitions helped raise awareness of the Forgotten Six, particularly among politicians.

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<sup>49</sup> That Ms Herbert was not contacted was understandable since she was not the NOK. This episode shows the complexities of dealing with MIA families: is it sufficient to contact the NOK in the hope they will contact other relevant family members on any given matter?

<sup>50</sup> Papps, 'US search for lost digger'.

<sup>51</sup> Generally, family members saw the provision of FRS as a constructive step—they felt their actions might one day be of benefit.

<sup>52</sup> J. Bourke, 'A complaint regarding the failure of Army HQ to take action to investigate the Gillespie case', [letter to Mal Brough], 10 Nov. 2003, Wantirna South, Vic.

<sup>53</sup> Brough's reply was a litany of anecdotal jottings, inaccurate platitudes and some policy statements of limited relevance. M. Brough, 'Recovery of the remains of servicemen who were either killed in action or missing in action, presumed dead, during the Vietnam conflict', [letter to J. Bourke], 11 Feb. 2004, Canberra, ACT.

<sup>54</sup> The Hon. Sussan Ley, Federal member for Farrer, and Woodland's local member, presented this petition in the House of Representatives on 1 Mar. 2004. S. Ley, 'Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives, 1 March: Vietnam—Personnel Missing-in-Action', Canberra, ACT, Commonwealth of Australia, Hansard, 2004, pp. 25413–14.

<sup>55</sup> Victorian Senator, Mitch Fifield presented this petition in the Senate on 11 Oct. 2005. M. Fifield, 'Parliamentary Debates, Senate, 11 October: Vietnam—Personnel Missing-in-Action', Canberra, ACT, Commonwealth of Australia, Hansard, 2005, pp. 43–4.

In early 2005, a poster designed by OAH to draw attention to the Forgotten Six was distributed to the state branches of the RSL and the VVAA. Indicative of the attitudes toward OAH, there was variable support for displaying the posters. For example, the New South Wales Branch of the RSL elected not to display the poster because they felt 'many investigations have already been concluded and the RSL feel ... we may be violating ... [the] privacy of the families'.<sup>56</sup>

It was increasingly apparent that the Achilles heel within the bureaucracy was the Government, specifically the ministers. They answered to the public, particularly when in election mode. In contrast, the generals usually answered to nobody, except occasionally to their ministers.

Some support emerged from among politicians. A fortuitous radio interview on 6PR (a Perth-based radio station) resulted in the iconoclastic Senator Ian Campbell requesting a meeting with me. I subsequently met with him and a Victorian Senator, Mitch Fifield on 28 April 2004.<sup>57</sup> Fifield and I met again in April 2005 and he brokered a meeting for me with the then Minister for Veterans' Affairs, De-Anne Kelly.<sup>58</sup> That meeting took place in July.

While there was emerging support for the Project, it was still necessary to maintain pressure on the Government. Public statements were particularly useful given the bureaucracy's recalcitrant attitude and insulting lack of action. 'The Government has been slovenly, callous and unpatriotic. ... It is a matter of national shame that they are washing their hands of these men'.<sup>59</sup> Such statements ruffled feathers. For example, in 2005, Senator Robert Hill, the then Minister of Defence, corresponding through an intermediary claimed 'Mr Bourke's activities have caused distress to some relatives of the deceased who have requested that he desist from contacting them'.<sup>60</sup>

The Government highlighted its position regarding the wishes and feelings of the families of the Forgotten Six through Senator Hill in 2005, '[we] ... will always take

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<sup>56</sup> D. Rowe, 'Inability to support the Operation Aussies Home project', [letter to J. Bourke], 19 May 2005, Sydney, NSW. The NSW Branch even returned the posters I had sent to them.

<sup>57</sup> In 2004, Ian Campbell was a Senator for Western Australia and the Minister for Territories, Local Government and Roads. Senator Fifield was given the task of baby-sitting OAH. Over the next 5 years, Senator Fifield was a useful and responsive ally.

<sup>58</sup> In July 2005, De-Anne Kelly was the Minister for Veterans' Affairs.

<sup>59</sup> T. Rindfleisch, 'We must find forgotten six', *Sunday Mail* (Adelaide), 25 Apr. 2004, p. 6.

<sup>60</sup> R. Hill, 'A response to representations made on behalf of Mr J. Bourke on 24 May 2005', [letter to R. McClelland], 22 July 2005, Canberra, ACT. Robert Hill was Minister for Defence from Nov. 2001 to Jan. 2006.

into account the wishes of the next-of-kin'.<sup>61</sup> The authorities presented this argument in various forms such as, 'we should not upset the families'; 'we must not raise their expectations'; and, 'the wishes of the families must be respected'.<sup>62</sup> Thus, the bureaucracy endeavoured to give the impression they understood the families and were following sensible processes. However, there was an underlying attempt to obviate the need to become involved by trotting out these *shop-front* reasons, with their inherent inconsistencies. However, as events unfolded the authorities found themselves drowning in a swamp of self-created fluid arguments.

Engagement of the US agencies almost became a reality when, at the behest of Minister Kelly the Deputy Chief of Army, Major General Gordon wrote to the Commander of JPAC in September 2005 and requested:

[JPAC] consider carrying out a site visit on behalf of the Australian Government to check safety and logistics, in anticipation of a subsequent request to carry out a forensic excavation on the ... Gillespie site.<sup>63</sup>

However, JPAC cancelled the proposed activity because of a reduction in their 'funding level' and did not reschedule the visit.<sup>64</sup>

It was increasingly obvious throughout 2005 that the Government was incapable of engaging the US agencies and/or unwilling to use Australian resources to search for the Forgotten Six. The remaining option was for OAH itself to undertake the work in Vietnam. Consequently and largely in order to avoid the possible legal repercussions of any actions, the OAH Project was legally constituted as an incorporated association. This enabled OAH to act as a legal entity in its dealings with the Government and others. OAH Inc. came into being on 22 September 2005.

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Numerous letters and e-mails sent to the author and some family members during 2002 to 2006 are available to instance the use of these three lines of argument. The contemporaneous policy under which the authorities advanced these arguments did not provide a basis for such *excuses*, although the reasons represented sensible criteria for the management of MIA cases.

<sup>63</sup> I. C. Gordon, 'A request to JPAC to consider carrying out a site visit of the Gillespie loss incident site', [letter to Brigadier General Michael Flowers], 13 Sept. 2005, Canberra, ACT. Gordon also requested that the Embassy in Hanoi support the activities of OAH in Vietnam, again at the behest of Minister Kelly. I. C. Gordon, 'A request to assist in establishing contact with witnesses related to the Parker and Gillson cases', [letter to Captain John Griffith], 13 Sept. 2005, Canberra, ACT.

<sup>64</sup> J. E. Webb, 'Inability of JPAC to conduct a site visit to the Gillespie loss incident site', [e-mail to J. Bourke], 28 Feb. 2006, Hickham, HI.

OAH decided to investigate the Parker and Gillson cases first because reasonably reliable data were available, there was access to witnesses and the families supported the proposed investigation. Gordon Peterson and Trevor Hagan were important witnesses.<sup>65</sup> In 1965, Peterson and Hagan were members of 1 Platoon A Company 1 RAR, the same platoon as Parker. In order to activate the Project in Vietnam, the Vietnamese Government insisted on my having Power of Attorney (POA) from the Parker and Gillson families, and the families readily provided these POA.<sup>66</sup>

The first in-country investigation by OAH took place in November 2005.<sup>67</sup> On 21 November, after liaising with the Vietnamese Foreign Affairs office in Bien Hoa, the OAH party travelled to the officially recorded location of Parker and Gillson's loss in the Gang Toi Hills. However, Peterson and Hagan indicated the recorded location was not where the battle took place. The OAH party moved to the east, backtracking along A Company's recorded axis of advance on 8 November 1965 and, after travelling approximately 400 metres Peterson and Hagan identified the location where they believed the action took place.

Two days later, the OAH team met with Mr Tam Quyet. Tam brought along an associate, Nguyen Van Bao, who in November 1965 commanded C238 Company, which operated in the Gang Toi Hills. Bao described the events that took place late in the afternoon of 8 November 1965 when A Company 1 RAR assaulted a dug-in platoon of his Company. Bao recalled A Company's scheme of manoeuvre, which coincided with official records. Bao explained, when the Australians withdrew at sunset they left two bodies behind. The significant element of Bao's information was his troops recovered Parker and Gillson's bodies the next day and buried them within a radius of 70 metres of where they fell.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Peterson joined the OAH Project in 2002. Hagan was a member of OAH and subsequently travelled to Vietnam in May 2006 and Jan.–Feb. 2007 to assist with the searching for Parker and Gillson.

<sup>66</sup> R. Gillson Jr, 'Limited Power of Attorney granted to James Bourke on 1 September', Wantirna, Vic., 2005; P. Woodland, 'General Power of Attorney granted to James Bourke on 8 September', Tumut, NSW, Thomas Llewellyn Stacy, Solicitor, 2005; and, W. K. Mudford, 'Power of Attorney granted to James Bourke on 9 September', Napier, NZ, Christopher John Ashton Wheeler, Solicitor, 2005.

<sup>67</sup> The expedition in Nov. 2005 cost approximately \$15,000 and participating members and supporters met these costs.

<sup>68</sup> J. Bourke and A. Bourke, 'Investigation of Burial Locations of Australian Soldiers Missing in Vietnam: Parker and Gillson (November 2005)', Operation Aussies Home Inc., <<http://web.archive.org/web/20060206171213/http://austmia.com/>>, accessed 1 Mar. 2015.



In contrast to the disinterested and inactive Australian authorities, Bao was notably prepared to help OAH. Bao explained why he helped, 'when the soldier is dead, he is no longer the enemy'.<sup>69</sup> Bao demonstrated a common Vietnamese trait: Respect for the warrior.<sup>70</sup>

Other allies progressively joined forces with OAH. In February 2006, Alan Griffin, Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs spoke in the House of Representatives 'regarding attempts being made to recover from Vietnam the bodies of two ... Australian servicemen missing-in-action there'. Griffin went on to urge the new Minister for Veterans' Affairs [Bruce Billson] ... to meet Mr Bourke and representatives of his group to ascertain what can be done in order to proceed further with this investigation'.<sup>71</sup> In March 2006, Minister Billson declared, 'We [OAH and the Government] have a shared purpose and share the same goal'.<sup>72</sup> This support was coincidental given a conversation in early 2006 during which I informed Minister Billson 'a private citizen had coughed up \$40,000 and a documentary was being made that would show no support at all from the Government'.<sup>73</sup> By mid-April, Billson arranged a grant of \$37,500 to OAH and the Department of Defence subsequently paid the money into the OAH account on 7 July.<sup>74</sup> In his media release of 8 April, Minister Billson stated 'In addition to the grant, the Australian Government ... will continue to assist Mr Bourke

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<sup>69</sup> In Apr. 2006, Bao again indicated his willingness to assist with searching for Parker and Gillson, 'I [will] help as long as I have two arms and two legs'. A. Davis, 'Availability of Nguyen Van Bao in May 2006', [e-mail to J. Bourke], 11 Apr. 2006, Vung Tau, Vietnam.

<sup>70</sup> Vietnamese veterans have 'a very compassionate attitude and they ... [helped] find our missing ... in all six cases'. Bourke, 'Operation Aussies Home and the recovery of the Australian MIAs from Vietnam'.

<sup>71</sup> A. Griffin, 'Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives, 9 February: Operation Aussies Home', Canberra, ACT, Commonwealth of Australia, Hansard, 2006, pp. 146–7. Griffin was Minister for Veterans' Affairs from 2007 to 2010 and Minister for Defence Personnel from 1 Apr. to 14 Sept. 2010.

<sup>72</sup> A. Rehn, 'Fallen but not forgotten', *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 18 Mar. 2006, sec. Features, p. 74. Billson was Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence during 2006 and 2007.

<sup>73</sup> McPhedran, 'Vets come home'; and, McPhedran, 'Mission accomplished as diggers come home'. The documentary referred to here was not the one produced by the ABC as part of their 'Australian Story' series in 2007. The idea of an OAH documentary emerged much earlier and preliminary negotiations had taken place with Glasshouse Pictures in 2005, courtesy of Walter Pearson. The working title was to be 'The Forgotten Six'.

<sup>74</sup> B. Nelson, 'Portfolio Budget Statements 2006–07: Defence Portfolio', Department of Defence, Canberra, ACT, <[http://www.defence.gov.au/budget/06-07/pbs/2006-2007\\_Defence\\_PBS\\_12\\_full.pdf](http://www.defence.gov.au/budget/06-07/pbs/2006-2007_Defence_PBS_12_full.pdf)>, accessed 2 June 2012; B. Billson, 'Media Release of 8 Apr. 2006: Army Support to Operation Aussies Home', Department of Defence, Canberra, ACT, <<http://www.defence.gov.au/minister/53tpl.cfm?CurrentId=5542>>, accessed 8 July 2012; and, B. Billson, 'Invitation to identify the burial sites of Parker and Gillson and advice of a grant to OAH', [letter to J. Bourke], 4 May 2006, Canberra, ACT.

with in-country search approval[s] from Vietnamese authorities'.<sup>75</sup> The unholy trinity was beginning to crumble.

OAH visited Vietnam again in May 2006. The aim of that visit was to locate the weapon pit in which Bao's men buried Parker and Gillson. Clive Williams accompanied the OAH team and his recollections confirmed much of Peterson and Hagan's information.<sup>76</sup>

Despite the enthusiasm of members of OAH, some family members maintained reservations about the Association's activities. In August 2006, Susanna Carver, Robert Carver's sister-in-law met other members of the families of the Forgotten Six at a ceremony in Perth and recalled:

There was mixed feelings about ... [OAH] ... some people thought it was a good idea, some people thought it wasn't. ... I was more or less on the fence. ... I can see the woman that told me not to have anything to do with you [OAH] ... that you were prying people.<sup>77</sup>

Christine Gillespie held a similar position.<sup>78</sup>

### **'A bridge too far'**

Robert Gillson Jr observed, 'Some families thought that there was no chance of finding something and that, whilst they admired Operation Aussies Home in their efforts, they thought that it might have been a bridge too far'.<sup>79</sup>

### **'People started walking all over him'**

As mentioned earlier, the Gillespie family did not want their case investigated. However, the family altered its position because of an August 2006 article in the *West*

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<sup>75</sup> Billson, 'Media Release of 8 April 2006: Army Support to Operation Aussies Home'. Billson later told me, 'Jim, I love your work. I felt it was a moral obligation on me as the minister to finance that work'. N. Wilson, 'The boys are finally coming home', *Herald Sun* (Melbourne), 19 May 2007, p. 36.

<sup>76</sup> C. Williams, 'A long time coming—home at last', *Australian Defence Force Journal*, Issue No. 179, 2009, pp. 42–7.

<sup>77</sup> Carver, 'Having a brother-in-law (Robert Carver) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'.

<sup>78</sup> Christine Gillespie recalled: 'Carmel [Gillespie's widow] and Fiona [Gillespie's daughter] were very strongly not wanting to have anything to do with OAH and didn't even want to talk to you, so I fell into their general frame of mind and thought I'm not going to talk to these guys'. Gillespie, 'Having a brother (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>79</sup> Gillson Jr, 'Having a father (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

*Australian* (Perth), which reported people visiting the Gillespie crash site.<sup>80</sup> Carmel Hendrie, Gillespie's widow reflected on her dilemma, 'I would've been happy ... until people started walking all over him. That was the thing that gnawed at me'.<sup>81</sup> The family immediately requested 'a formal and conclusive investigation as to whether there are remains at the site [and] a clear final statement ... if no remains are found'.<sup>82</sup>

The Gillespie family reacted to their perception of a lack of Government cooperation and in late September 2006 requested the assistance of OAH.<sup>83</sup> Hendrie recalled:

[I] still wasn't really impressed with Jim Bourke (chuckle). When we came back [from Perth], it was Christine [Gillespie's sister] who sort of did the push over, as in to say do you think we should get Jim on board ... and I said Ahmm 'It's *Jeim*' (chuckle) ... and then I had to ring Jim Bourke.<sup>84</sup>

Hendrie formalised this arrangement in November with the provision of her POA.<sup>85</sup>

OAH members again travelled to Vietnam in November, primarily to take a government team to the Gillespie crash site. However, the Government representatives did not travel as intended and consequently OAH wasted approximately \$5,000 in travel and accommodation.<sup>86</sup>

In January–February 2007, OAH took two sets of Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) to Vietnam to help locate the graves of Parker and Gillson.<sup>87</sup> The process of obtaining approval from the Vietnamese Government to deploy the equipment to the

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<sup>80</sup> S. Pennells, 'Does Vietnam jungle hold secret of missing digger?', *West Australian* (Perth), 15 Aug. 2006, p. 8.

<sup>81</sup> Hendrie, 'Having a husband (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>82</sup> Gillespie, Hendrie and Pike, 'John Gillespie MIA'.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*; and, Hendrie, 'Having a husband (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>84</sup> Hendrie, 'Having a husband (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>85</sup> C. Hendrie, 'Limited Power of Attorney granted to James Bourke on 9 November', Melbourne, Vic., 2006.

<sup>86</sup> The machinery of Government took some time to sort out the status of the Government Team that was to deploy to Vietnam. The respective parties decided the Government Team would act in an official capacity and the Australian Government advised the Vietnamese Government accordingly.

<sup>87</sup> The Australian National University and Diverse Data Communications of Canberra provided the GPR equipment with operators, Paul Brugman and Jeffery Wullaert respectively.

field began in July 2006.<sup>88</sup> However, the Australian Government did not secure the necessary approvals until 11 February 2007, the day before the GPR equipment returned to Australia. The operation in January–February 2007 cost OAH approximately \$20,000. We sought reimbursement for this loss and for good measure added \$5,000 for the futile trip in November 2006. Minister Billson and I met in Melbourne on 13 March 2007. Over lunch, I politely requested the reimbursement of \$25,000. Minister Billson agreed and told his Chief of Staff to sort the matter out. The Minister shouted lunch and I enjoyed my fish 'n chips.

In March–April 2007, OAH again made efforts to employ the GPR. The advance party comprising of Peter Aylett, Walter Pearson and myself left Sydney on 17 March. OAH escorted a Government team to the Gillespie crash site and moved on to Bien Hoa on 25 March to prepare for the Parker and Gillson excavation. After ensuring all approvals were in place, we called the OAH main body forward and the party arrived on 4 April.<sup>89</sup> The laborious task of running the GPR over the site began two days later.

The GPR operators surveyed approximately 4,000 square metres of ground and the OAH crew, using a mechanical excavator, excavated approximately 30 holes. However, the excavations were unsuccessful. By Saturday 14 April, the team was literally falling to pieces, but the men persisted.<sup>90</sup> On Monday 16 April, largely because of the 'professional belligerence' of David Thomas, the OAH sub-surface search expert, the first signs of Parker and Gillson were unearthed.<sup>91</sup>

The OAH Team progressively excavated the burial site, confirming it contained two skeletons and on Wednesday 18 April, the workers in the hole recovered a map—'the same map as [the one] we used ... in 1965'. I called the Embassy in Hanoi, 'Get

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<sup>88</sup> J. Bourke, 'Operation Aussies Home (Letter of Appreciation)', [letter to T. Gambaro], 20 July 2006, Wantirna, Vic.

<sup>89</sup> David Thomas and Paul Brugman travelled from Australia, bringing two sets of GPR equipment with them, one for use by Brugman and the other for Jeffery Wullaert. Jeffery and his new bride, Donna cut short their honeymoon in Phuket and travelled to Vietnam—they had married on 17 Mar. Ray Latimer who was on business in Kuala Lumpur travelled direct to Vietnam.

<sup>90</sup> Because of extreme climatic conditions, the OAH team worked three days on, one off, two more in the field then another rest day. Funds were getting tight: OAH owed the Vietnamese Government about \$US 25,000 for staff support, labour and plant hire, and compensation for crops OAH removed.

<sup>91</sup> Thomas suggested, and insisted, on excavating a number of areas of interest located and plotted in May 2006.

the Government forensic team over here now. We've got Parker and Gillson'.<sup>92</sup> The remains of Parker and Gillson were located at GR YT 16843 23467, approximately 400 metres east by northeast of the officially recorded location.<sup>93</sup>

The government forensic team arrived late Sunday night, 22 April and the excavation was completed the following Friday.<sup>94</sup> The government forensic experts confirmed the identifications on Sunday 29 April.

The recovery of Parker and Gillson was a significant turning point in OAH's relationships with the authorities.<sup>95</sup> On the men's repatriation, accolades flowed from the Governor General, the Prime Minister, the Chief of Army and others.<sup>96</sup> Members rose in the House to express their condolences, mentioning the work of OAH.<sup>97</sup> Minister Billson reflected, 'That's what I'd expect my nation to do and that's what you quite rightly demanded—the nation did [so] and that was good'.<sup>98</sup> Doors opened!

The recovery of Parker and Gillson also resulted in a change in OAH's relationship with the RSL. General Phillips apologised for not supporting me in 2002.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>92</sup> J. Bourke, 'Operation Aussies Home and the recovery of Parker and Gillson', [Interviewed by P. Cave], 19 Apr. 2007, Bien Hoa, Vietnam, Radio National, ABC Local Radio, <<http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2007/s1901874.htm>>, accessed 4 Mar. 2011.

<sup>93</sup> 29th Engineer Battalion US Army, 'Map, Vietnam, Tan Uyen, Series L7014, Sheet 6331 II, 1:50,000', 1971.

<sup>94</sup> The Government Team, with assistance from OAH members finalised the excavation of the burial site and recovered some significant artefacts. However, prior to the Government Team's arrival, OAH recovered most of the men's remains with sufficient evidence to prove the remains were those of Parker and Gillson.

<sup>95</sup> Army offered to meet the costs that OAH had incurred for Vietnamese staff support, labour, compensation and plant hire. The sum OAH had tentatively agreed with the Vietnamese officials for this support was \$US 25,000 (say \$AUD 30,000), but it is possible a reduced sum was settled.

<sup>96</sup> M. Jeffery, 'Appreciation of the ongoing commitment to the recovery and repatriation of Australian servicemen from Vietnam', [letter to J. Bourke], 24 Aug. 2007, Canberra, ACT. J. Howard, 'Appreciation of efforts in locating and recovering the remains of Lance Corporal Richard Parker and Private Peter Gillson', [letter to J. Bourke], 22 July 2007, Canberra, ACT. P. Leahy, 'Appreciation for efforts in successfully locating Richard Parker and Peter Gilson', [letter to J. Bourke], 15 June 2007, Canberra, ACT. A. D. I. Gallaway, 'Congratulations on locating the remains of Richard Parker and Peter Gillson', [letter to J. Bourke], 22 Apr. 2007, Townsville, Qld.

<sup>97</sup> J. Howard, 'Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives, 12 June: Private Peter Gillson and Lance Corporal Richard Parker', Canberra, ACT, Commonwealth of Australia, Hansard, 2007, pp. 3–4; and, J. Gillard, 'Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives, 12 June: Private Peter Gillson and Lance Corporal Richard Parker', Canberra, ACT, Commonwealth of Australia, Hansard, 2007, pp. 4–5.

<sup>98</sup> B. Billson, 'The recovery of Australian MIAs from Vietnam', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], 13 Nov. 2010, Frankston, Vic.

<sup>99</sup> P. R. Phillips, 'Congratulations on the recovery of Parker and Gillson', [e-mail to J. Bourke], 27 June 2007, Canberra, ACT.

On 28 June 2007, I received a Certificate of Appreciation from the RSL National Executive and they subsequently presented me with the award of ANZAC of the Year in 2008. The wheel had turned 180 degrees. Nevertheless, despite the recovery of Parker and Gillson, 'sideline spectators' still expressed reservations about the likelihood of locating other members of the Forgotten Six.<sup>100</sup>

The third phase of the overall OAH strategy began in April 2007. Given their involvement with the Gillespie case in late 2006, the Army was keen to find Fisher. Getting to this stage required some intensive lobbying and strenuous in-country work by OAH members; however, further lobbying was necessary to cajole the RAAF into searching for the two aviators, Herbert and Carver.

In May 2008, at short notice Minister Alan Griffin organised a meeting for me with the Minister for Defence Science and Personnel, Warren Snowdon. On 14 May, I advised Minister Snowdon and his staff that OAH was prepared to carry out the in-country investigation of the two RAAF cases, free-of-charge. The next day, OAH confirmed the offer in writing.<sup>101</sup> A meeting was held a week later between RAAF HQ and Army History Unit (AHU), with AHU being represented by Brian Manns and Jack Thurgar.<sup>102</sup> Manns and Thurgar pointed out 'that if Air Force doesn't do anything about Herbert and Carver, they will be embarrassed by Jim Bourke and Operation Aussies Home'.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> In 2007, 'Mr Ekins said the reason [for the Herbert and Carver aircraft crashing] was probably a mid-air explosion caused by a hung bomb ... [and] "there'd be very little chance of finding any remains from 20,000 feet". P. Maley and A. Wilson, 'Hard to find more diggers', *Australian* (Sydney), 6 June 2007, p. 6. In 2008, after Fisher was recovered, the National President of the RSL, Major General Crews opined 'that the fate of the two airmen might be harder to determine because there was uncertainty as to whether they had bailed out of their stricken aircraft'. M. Dodd, 'Last digger on way home from Vietnam War', *Australian* (Sydney), 12 Sept. 2008, p. 7. Major General Bill Crews was the National President of the RSL from 2003 until 2009.

<sup>101</sup> J. Bourke, 'Investigation of the cases of MIA Servicemen from Vietnam: Flying Officer Herbert and Pilot Officer Carver', [letter to Warren Snowdon], 15 May 2008, Boronia, Vic.

<sup>102</sup> Because of the lack of dedicated resources, Army traditionally used the AHU staff to deal with MIA matters. In 2008, AHU staff saw an opportunity to assist RAAF with their two cases. As a member of AHU, Thurgar was involved with the Gillespie case; he was the Lead Investigator for the Fisher case; and he fulfilled a similar role in the Herbert and Carver cases. Thurgar later joined the staff of the Unrecovered War Casualties–Army in 2010 and retired in Dec. 2013. Brian Manns, Deputy Head of AHU was involved in the Gillespie and Fisher investigations and with the initial work on the Herbert and Carver cases. Manns became the Manager of the Unrecovered War Casualties–Army on its raising in 2010.

<sup>103</sup> M. Binskin and J. Cotterell, 'RAAF involvement in the recovery of Australian MIAs from Vietnam and other general MIA matters', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], 17 Jan. 2011, Canberra, ACT.

In February 2008, OAH commenced assembling a report on the RAAF cases. In May, Walter Pearson carried out a reconnaissance in Quang Nam Province, exploring the general area of the RAAF loss incident. Lance Halvorson, an experienced RAAF navigator, advised on the specifications of the Canberra Bomber.<sup>104</sup> Peter Aylett constructed the maps for the report and I wrote a computer program to predict the aircraft's Last Known Position (LKP).<sup>105</sup> The report was completed and sent to Minister Snowdon and RAAF HQ on 8 September.<sup>106</sup> The letter to Minister Snowdon covering the report clarified and reinforced the offer made 'on 15 May 2008, for OAH to carry out the necessary investigations to fully account for Herbert and Carver'.<sup>107</sup> Gary Flanagan, an American veteran who worked for the US MIA agencies in Vietnam for 35 consecutive years offered his assistance to OAH in negotiating with the Vietnamese Government.<sup>108</sup>

On 15 October, the Deputy Chief of Air Force wrote to the Deputy Chief of Army:

Mr Jim Bourke from Operation Aussies Home has written to the Minister for Defence Science and Personnel ... providing a copy of a lengthy report and stating that his previous offer to conduct an investigation at the invitation of the Government remains extant.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Lance Halvorson served with No. 2 Squadron RAAF in Vietnam from 19 Apr. to 28 Oct. 1967.

<sup>105</sup> The computer program was nicknamed 'Hugo' (first name), with the family name of 'WHERE'. I thought 'Hugo WHERE' was an appropriate name for a program designed to predict the LKP of an aircraft. The LKP determined by Hugo was 4,800 metres southwest by south of the officially recorded LKP.

<sup>106</sup> J. Bourke, 'MSS2135: Initial Report of an Investigation to Fully Account for O44310 Flying Officer Michael Patrick Herbert and O119223 Pilot Officer Robert Charles Carver Missing In Action (Believed Dead) in Viet Nam on 3 November 1970 (Compiled by Operation Aussies Home Inc. on behalf of the families of Herbert and Carver, dated 4 September)', Canberra, ACT, Australian War Memorial. I was serious about mounting an in-country investigation into the two RAAF cases. I had the families' POA, a prerequisite for doing business with the Vietnamese Government and in Aug. 2008, I drafted letters to the Departments of Foreign Affairs in Quang Nam Province and Da Nang City requesting their support.

<sup>107</sup> J. Bourke, 'Full accounting for Flying Officer Herbert and Pilot Officer Carver', [letter to Warren Snowdon], 8 Sept. 2008, Boronia, Vic.

<sup>108</sup> G. Flanagan, 'Advice and offer of assistance (Herbert and Carver cases)', [e-mail to J. Bourke], 20 July 2008, Ballinger, TX. Flanagan served in Hanoi continuously from July 1992 to July 2007, primarily as Chief of Casualty Resolution Officer for the US MIA Office, a detachment of JPAC. Flanagan is considered an expert on South East Asian MIA matters and has delivered addresses at the Texas University and elsewhere on the subject.

<sup>109</sup> G. C. Brown, 'Investigation into the disappearance of Flying Officer Herbert and Pilot Officer Carver', [letter to the Deputy Chief of Army], 15 Oct. 2008, Canberra, ACT.

The RAAF letter requested 'endorsement for Air Force to task AHU to investigate the disappearance of FLGOFF Herbert and PLTOFF Carver'.<sup>110</sup> On 24 November, OAH submitted over 269 pages of source documents to Minister Snowden.<sup>111</sup>

Activating RAAF interest in the Herbert and Carver cases was a major achievement and apart from a few minor forays, concluded the bulk of OAH lobbying.

### ***OUTCOMES OF 'ATTENDING TO UNFINISHED BUSINESS'***

From 2007 to 2009, with some assistance from OAH, the ADF recovered the remains of the other four members of the Forgotten Six, Gillespie, Fisher, Herbert and Carver. These recoveries were clearly outcomes of OAH lobbying and investigative activities.

AHU began investigating the Gillespie case in August 2006 following the family's request for Government assistance. Minister Billson chaired meetings in Melbourne on 7 September, 6 October and 9 November to resolve various issues, including the conduct of in-country work on the Gillespie case. At the meeting in September Minister Billson directed two OAH members be included on the Government Team—'Team Australia', as Billson liked to call it: 'We needed the best team to do this work and the best team members weren't all within the Commonwealth'.<sup>112</sup>

After further research and in-country investigations, Team Australia departed Sydney on 14 November 2007 to excavate the Gillespie site. Peter Aylett and David Thomas were members of the Team.

The Team started excavating 40 metres uphill from the location OAH pointed out in March 2007. Aylett recalled, 'we actually spent three days, starting up the top where the gunner on the ... helicopter said it [the site] was'.<sup>113</sup> Using Skype, Aylett contacted Les Maher, who was involved in the Gillespie loss incident in April 1971. Maher had visited the site with OAH in November 2006. He clearly acquainted the Government members of the Team with his recollections of where the helicopter came

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Subsequently, some ADF staff, while gaily waving around the documents I had passed to them, claimed they had located the documents themselves.

<sup>112</sup> Billson, 'The recovery of Australian MIAs from Vietnam'.

<sup>113</sup> Aylett, 'Involvement with Operation Aussies Home and the recovery of Australian MIAs from Vietnam'.



to rest.<sup>114</sup> Consequently, the Team shifted their attention to the originally proposed location, and between 26 and 28 November, they recovered Gillespie's remains.

Defence offered assistance to the Fisher family in 2007, after OAH discovered Parker and Gillson. The Fisher family accepted the ADF offer and Army investigated the Fisher case, carrying out in-country work in 2007 and 2008. Army HQ explained how they became involved in finding and recovering Fisher:

Work towards the recovery and repatriation of PTE David Fisher commenced in earnest in early 2008, although the team working on all of the Vietnam war cases had maintained a watching brief from the middle of 2007.<sup>115</sup>

AHU investigators, primarily Jack Thurgar tapped into the Vietnamese Diaspora in Australia using community newspapers, with pictures of the weapon carried by Fisher.<sup>116</sup> Witnesses from the Australian side were also utilised. Thurgar located Squadron Leader Nicholls, a New Zealand pilot who served with 9 Squadron RAAF in Vietnam while on exchange duties.<sup>117</sup> Nicholls led the flight of six helicopters tasked to extract Fisher's patrol.<sup>118</sup>

Based on the recovery of some artefacts and a small quantity of remains, the ADF carried out an excavation in August 2008 and recovered further remains later determined to be those of Fisher. These remains were recovered from GR YS 62381 95877, which was approximately 940 metres northwest by west of the officially recorded location of Fisher's loss.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> S. Yeaman, 'A response to a request for information regarding certain MIA matters', [letter to J. Bourke], 8 Dec. 2010, Canberra, ACT.

<sup>116</sup> Four Australian Vietnamese families responded and one revealed 'he and one other soldier buried what they thought was an American soldier' during the War. C. Boer, 'Last MIA to return home', *Army: The Soldiers' Newspaper*, Edn 1199, 2 Oct. 2008, p. 19.

<sup>117</sup> A Court of Inquiry considered the Fisher loss incident between 30 Sept. and 12 Oct. 1969. The Court did not call Squadron Leader Nicholls to give evidence, even though he was still in-country. F. J. Spry, B. M. Reid and W. N. Robertson, 'Court of Inquiry 2787344 Pte D. J. E. Fisher—3 SAS Squadron: Reported Missing-in-Action in the vicinity of YS 633957 at approximately 1130 hrs on 27 Sep [sic] 69', Vung Tau, Vietnam, 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Task Force, 1969. Nicholls served in Vietnam with 9 Squadron RAAF from 4 Mar. to 13 Nov. 1969. Department of Veterans' Affairs, 'Nominal Roll of Vietnam Veterans', Department of Veterans' Affairs, Canberra, ACT, <<http://www.vietnamroll.gov.au/VeteranSearch.aspx>> accessed 23 June 2011.

<sup>118</sup> Thurgar ascertained Nicholls still had his logbook and was able to describe the exact course flown on 27 Sept. 1969, when extracting Fisher's patrol. Thurgar, 'The recovery of Australian MIAs from Vietnam'.

<sup>119</sup> 29th Engineer Battalion US Army, 'Map, Vietnam, Xa Cam My, Series L7014, Sheet 6430 I, 1:50,000', 1969.

OAH was not involved in the Fisher investigation, apart from the initial report provided in October 2003, although David Thomas managed to get to the site for one day, 27 August 2008. Thomas suggested 'the Shonstead Gradiometer, which is a magnetics-based detector ... [used by the Excavation Team] was very unsuitable' for finding small artefacts such as dog tags. He suggested Minelab F3 Mine Detectors were better suited to the task and these might be obtainable through 'Dong Nai Foreign Affairs Office'.<sup>120</sup> The equipment, with operators arrived at the site the next day and Fisher's dog tags were located that afternoon.

Jack Thurgar considered 'looking for David Fisher ... came about simply because OAH provided the lead in looking for John Gillespie'.<sup>121</sup> However, full credit must go to Thurgar for his excellent investigative work on both cases.

In 2007, Shane Herbert, Michael Herbert's brother watched the two episodes of *Australian Story* dealing with Parker and Gillson's recovery and the emerging Gillespie case.<sup>122</sup> Herbert closely followed the subsequent recovery of Gillespie and Fisher and by April 2008, Shane Herbert and his father, John engaged with OAH.<sup>123</sup> Shane Herbert felt:

There was a series of little episodes where somehow I was being prepared for the journey of Michael's search and potential recovery. ... When Jim Bourke made contact [in 2008], it was almost—we were primed for it. ... There was an opportunity to put a search into place. ... I wanted it to occur in this timeframe; I wanted it to occur in my lifetime.<sup>124</sup>

Susanna Carver, Robert Carver's sister-in-law happily followed suit. Both families gave their POA to me in April 2008.<sup>125</sup>

While in Vietnam in March and April 2008, primarily to investigate the Fisher case, Brian Manns and Jack Thurgar, with the concurrence of RAAF raised the Herbert

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<sup>120</sup> D. Thomas, 'Involvement with Operation Aussies Home and the recovery of Australian MIAs from Vietnam', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], 29 Apr. 2010, Nelson Bay, NSW.

<sup>121</sup> Thurgar, 'The recovery of Australian MIAs from Vietnam'.

<sup>122</sup> Hawkins, 'Behind Enemy Lines: Part 1'.

<sup>123</sup> Herbert, 'Having a brother (Michael Herbert) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Herbert and Herbert, 'Power of Attorney granted to James Bourke on 2 April', North Glenelg, SA, W.T. Denny, Justice of the Peace, 2008; and, W. Carver, S. Carver and A. Carver, 'Power of Attorney granted to James Bourke on 13 April', Underwood, Qld, Robin Martin, Solicitor, 2008.

and Carver loss with the Vietnamese authorities 'to ascertain what information/records' might be available.<sup>126</sup> Army had further discussions with the Vietnamese in August 2008, and in January and April 2009.<sup>127</sup>

Based on the location of the target Herbert and Carver attacked on 3 November 1970, Thurgar requested the Vietnamese officials visit the villages of Thon Vinh and Ta Bhing to seek out local witnesses.

Three elderly KaTu men stepped up to say they knew of a place deep in the jungle, in Czun Canyon, where they had found remnants of a plane many years before [probably in 1982].<sup>128</sup>

Two crumpled bits of metal were recovered and the identification of one item as 'the ... air position indicator was sufficient justification for the RAAF to approve a preliminary excavation'.<sup>129</sup> Furthermore, in April 2009, Minister Snowdon reported:

The Australian Defence Investigation Team ... [is] confident they have located the Royal Australian Air Force Canberra bomber wreckage in thick jungle in an extremely rugged, remote and sparsely populated area of Quang Nam Province, Vietnam, near the Laotian border. ... While no human remains were found, a number of military artifacts [sic] have been discovered including a club badge, which was unique to RAAF's No. 2 Squadron.<sup>130</sup>

The crash site was at GR YC 82211 38420, which was approximately 5,870 metres southwest of the officially recorded LKP.<sup>131</sup>

Jack Thurgar and Wing Commander Mick Warby briefed representatives of the Herbert and Carver families in Adelaide on 6 May.<sup>132</sup> RAAF HQ necessarily invited me to this meeting because the POA granted by the two families had a special requirement that stated RAAF were to direct 'any communications regarding the subject matter'

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<sup>126</sup> A. Elfverson, 'Research questions: Cooperation between RAAF HQ and Army History Unit', [e-mail to J. Bourke], 27 Aug. 2010, Canberra, ACT.

<sup>127</sup> Yeaman, 'A response to a request for information regarding certain MIA matters'.

<sup>128</sup> S. Powell, 'The Hunt for Magpie 91', *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 20 June 2009, sec. History, pp. 17–18.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 17–18.

<sup>130</sup> W. Snowdon, 'Media Release dated 21 April 2009: Wreckage of RAAF Aircraft found in Vietnam', Department of Defence, Canberra, ACT, <<http://www.defence.gov.au/minister/74tpl.cfm?CurrentId=9016>>, accessed 18 Jan. 2012.

<sup>131</sup> AMS (LU) US Army, 'Map, Vietnam, Muang Bac, Series TL 7014, Sheet 6540 III (1965) 1:50,000', 1966 and AMS (LU) US Army, 'Map, Vietnam, Atiun, Series TL 7014, Sheet 6540 IV (1965) 1:50,000', 1966.

<sup>132</sup> Wing Commander Warby was the Deputy Director Coordination on Air Force HQ.

through me.<sup>133</sup> The meeting in Adelaide did not go well. Shane Herbert insisted OAH be represented on the Excavation Team and Warby agreed to allow two positions for OAH. However, RAAF later rescinded this arrangement and OAH had to fight again.<sup>134</sup> A risk assessment of the RAAF plan was completed and sent to RAAF HQ.<sup>135</sup> Bill Denny, a friend of the Herbert family enlisted the support of Michael Atkinson, the South Australian Attorney General, for whom Denny worked.<sup>136</sup> Denny also called on the South Australian Branch of the RSL for support, who in turn enlisted the support of their National Executive.

On 12 June, Air Marshal Binskin, Chief of Air Force invited me to Canberra for a chat.<sup>137</sup> After exchanging pleasantries, Air Marshal Binskin confirmed one OAH member would be included on the RAAF Excavation Team. This was overwhelming. Peter Aylett was in serious physical training and because of his field engineering skills he was included as an Excavation Team member, as the representative of OAH and the families.

Subsequent searching located human remains. RAAF HQ advised on 22 July that the Excavation Team recovered 'a couple of fragments which they believe to be bone' but further work was required to determine 'whether these fragments ... [were] human or not'. RAAF HQ requested 'the foregoing' be passed to the families.<sup>138</sup> On 30 July, Minister Combet confirmed the recovery of Herbert and Carver's remains.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Herbert and Herbert, 'Power of Attorney granted to James Bourke on 2 April', p. 1; and, W. Carver, S. Carver and A. Carver, 'Power of Attorney granted to James Bourke on 13 April', p. 2. This provision did not sit well with RAAF and Warby tried to bypass me on one occasion, but John and Shane Herbert, the father and the brother of Michael Herbert respectively promptly rebuked RAAF HQ in writing. J. P. J. Herbert and S. Herbert, 'Channels of communication with John and Shane Herbert', [letter to M. B. Warby], 17 Aug. 2008, North Glenelg, SA.

<sup>134</sup> M. B. Warby, 'Composition of the team to excavate the crash site of A84-231', [e-mail to J. Bourke], 22 May 2009, Canberra, ACT.

<sup>135</sup> J. Bourke, 'Herbert: The need to expedite identification of any remains that are recovered', [e-mail to Henrik Ehlers], 28 May 2009, Boronia, Vic.

<sup>136</sup> Denny, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Michael Herbert)'.

<sup>137</sup> Air Marshal Binskin was Chief of Air Force from 2008 until 2011. Binskin was promoted to Air Chief Marshal and appointed Chief of the Defence Force on 30 June 2014.

<sup>138</sup> H. Ehlers, 'Operation Magpies Return update', [e-mail to J. Bourke], 22 July 2009, Canberra, ACT.

<sup>139</sup> G. Combet, 'Media Release dated 30 July 2009: Remains of Australia's Last Two Missing ADF Members found in Vietnam', Department of Defence, Canberra, ACT, <<http://www.defence.gov.au/minister/94tpl.cfm?CurrentId=9318>>, accessed 12 June 2012. Greg Combet entered the outer ministry on 6 June 2009, as Minister for Defence Personnel, Materiel and Science, and Minister Assisting the Minister for Climate Change. Combet continued as Minister for Defence Personnel, Material and Science until he announced his resignation from his

RAAF briefed the families on the repatriation arrangements in Adelaide on 6 August. All was good. The ADF had diligently completed the task of fully accounting for Herbert and Carver.

The ADF's execution of the Fisher, Herbert and Carver investigations was exemplary, as one would expect given the calibre of the individuals and organisations involved. Liaison between the Australian and Vietnamese Governments was excellent and resulted in the Vietnamese providing a high level of in-country assistance. Researchers located Vietnamese witnesses who were able to contribute valuable and in some instances critical information. The loss incident locations involving the four Army personnel were relatively accessible and search teams were able to withdraw to hotel accommodation each evening. However, the crash site of Herbert and Carver's aircraft (Tail No. A84-231) was in a remote area and required the Excavation Team to bivouac near the site with supplies, including fresh water, being portered in every couple of days.<sup>140</sup>

Despite the implied objective nature of the recovery operations, they were also heavily emotional. Jack Thurgar summarised the emotions involved, '[there is] relief they've been found but at the same time you start to think of their families and you go through a mourning process'.<sup>141</sup>

Returning the Forgotten Six home did not come cheaply. Army HQ advised the figure of \$631,000 was 'reasonably accurate' for costs incurred to repatriate the first three of the Forgotten Six, Parker, Gillson and Gillespie.<sup>142</sup> According to Army, the easily identifiable costs for Fisher were \$208,000 but these did not include the salaries of the ADF staff, 'aircraft operating costs and unit costs associated with the funerals'.<sup>143</sup>

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ministerial responsibilities following Prime Minister Gillard's defeat in a leadership spill on 26 June 2013.

<sup>140</sup> Accessing the crash site of A84-231 required a road move from the township of Thanh My, a river crossing and a lengthy trek through mountainous jungle covered terrain. The journey took six hours or more, with no option to return to the comfort of Thanh My each evening. Powell, 'The Hunt for Magpie 91', p. 18.

<sup>141</sup> S. Talip, 'Relief but no elation for searchers', *Canberra Times*, 24 Apr. 2009, sec. General News, p. 6.

<sup>142</sup> In Sept. 2008, Geoffrey Barker quoted a figure of \$631,000 as the cost of repatriating Parker, Gillson and Gillespie. G. Barker, 'Bringing home these dead: a questionable venture', *Australian Financial Review* (Sydney), 20 Sept. 2008, p. 32. Army acknowledged this figure in 2010. Yeaman, 'A response to a request for information regarding certain MIA matters', Attachment 1, p. 2.

<sup>143</sup> Yeaman, 'A response to a request for information regarding certain MIA matters', Attachment 1, pp. 1-2.

The Government provided a total of approximately \$92,500 to OAH. RAAF HQ advised the costs incurred in searching for and repatriation of Herbert and Carver were approximately \$652,103.<sup>144</sup> The Defence Community Organisation met some costs associated with the men's funerals, a total of \$256,094.<sup>145</sup> Remembering the accounting systems did not capture all costs, the State spent well in excess of an estimated \$1.8 million to recover and commemorate the Forgotten Six.

## **MEANINGFUL ACTIONS AND BEHAVIOURS**

The families' engagement with OAH and/or the ADF and the impact of OAH lobbying on the bureaucracy framed the actions associated with bringing the Forgotten Six home. Some actions and behaviours of members of the men's families and certain actions by the Government and the ADF are informative. First, the authorities clearly failed to engage meaningfully with the families until 2006 or later in some cases, and this resulted in OAH working on the behalf of five of the six families. Second, the issue around whether the authorities would have recovered the Forgotten Six, if not for the activities of OAH warrants examination. Third, after being severely embarrassed by the recovery of Parker and Gillson in 2007, the Government and the ADF needed to engage in a form of damage control to refurbish their image. Some of their actions, by omission or commission blatantly tested the truth. Fourth, a review of some of the bureaucracy's behaviours and actions helps explain why it took 36 years or more to recover the Forgotten Six.

The POA from the families of the Forgotten Six provided a legal basis for OAH's work during 2002 to 2008. The Fisher family engaged directly with the ADF. These engagements showed the families were keen to recover the remains of their kin, regardless of the risks to their existing states of closure.

Until 2006, the authorities failed to engage meaningfully with the families. Contact occurred briefly following the loss incidents; again in 1984, regarding the Government Mission to Vietnam; for a short period around 2001, when the Carver and Herbert families received erroneous information concerning the crash site of A84-231;

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<sup>144</sup> A. Elfverson, 'Research questions: Costs incurred in the searching for and the repatriation of Herbert and Carver during 2008 and 2009', [e-mail to J. Bourke], 15 Sept. 2010, Canberra, ACT.

<sup>145</sup> C. Davis, 'Funeral costs paid by the Defence Community Organisation for the six funerals of the MIA from Vietnam', [e-mail to J. Bourke], 14 Sept. 2011, Canberra, ACT. Costs reported by the Defence Community Organisation did not include all costs associated with the funerals, only those paid by the Defence Community Organisation. Participating units would have incurred other costs, which were not captured.

and in 2003, when the authorities needlessly approached some family members regarding the provision of FRS. Hence, because of their limited contact, the authorities possessed little understanding of the families' needs and wants.

The question is whether anybody would have recovered the Forgotten Six if it were not for the activities of OAH. When interviewed during 2010 and 2011, the overwhelming response from the Government and ADF officials was 'No'. As might be expected, members of OAH took a similar and unanimous position. Air Marshal Binskin proclaimed, 'If you hadn't kick started it [the project to recover the six MIAs] ... to get it going that way, we probably wouldn't be sitting here', discussing the recoveries of all six.<sup>146</sup> General Leahy supported Air Marshal Binskin's view.<sup>147</sup> In 2010, Minister Griffin offered confirmation of the effectiveness of OAH, 'I don't believe they would have [recovered the last three MIAs], absolutely not'.<sup>148</sup> Minister Billson explained, 'the thing that Operation Aussies Home did was it injected new information, new insights and I think a new impetus to do everything that could be done to try and recover the remains'.<sup>149</sup> Jack Thurgar emphasised 'none of the MIA cases from Vietnam would have been recovered if Operation Aussies Home had not started [their project]'.<sup>150</sup> Brian Manns agreed but qualified his statement suggesting if OAH had not started the process, 'sometime in the future something else might have come along to ... get that ball rolling'.<sup>151</sup>

Hence, without the involvement of OAH, it is likely nobody would have recovered the Forgotten Six, certainly not within the timeframe of 2007 to 2009. Furthermore, starting in 2008 AHU investigated the cases of Hudson and Moncrieff, the two MIAs from Borneo. The searchers found the men's remains, arranged for their

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<sup>146</sup> Binskin and Cotterell, 'RAAF involvement in the recovery of Australian MIAs from Vietnam and other general MIA matters'.

<sup>147</sup> General Leahy observed, '[OAH] provided the example, provided the impetus, got the interest running. No, I think it wouldn't have happened'. P. Leahy, 'ADF involvement in the recovery of Australian MIAs from Vietnam and other general MIA matters', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], 28 Apr. 2011, Canberra, ACT. General Leahy was Chief of Army from 2002 to 2008, after which he retired. He is now the Director of the National Security Institute at the University of Canberra.

<sup>148</sup> A. Griffin, 'The recovery of Australian MIAs from Vietnam', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], 9 Dec. 2010, Waverley Gardens, Vic.

<sup>149</sup> Billson, 'The recovery of Australian MIAs from Vietnam'.

<sup>150</sup> Thurgar, 'The recovery of Australian MIAs from Vietnam'.

<sup>151</sup> B. Manns, 'ADF involvement in the recovery of Australian MIAs from Vietnam and other general MIA matters', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], 18 Jan. 2011, Fyshwick, ACT.

identification and returned them to Australia in 2010.<sup>152</sup> Hudson and Moncrieff's recovery happened after OAH stimulated the ADF's interest in MIA matters.

The recovery of Parker and Gillson in 2007 severely embarrassed the Government and the ADF, and they needed to take action to show themselves in a more favourable light, particularly in the eyes of the standing force and the public. Hence, within the bureaucracy some officials thought it best to sideline OAH while others focused on showing the Government and ADF were competent and keen to resolve the remaining four cases.

Attempts by the bureaucracy to sideline OAH manifested in a number of ways. First, some individuals were reluctant to have OAH involved in the recovery operations and some claimed the Vietnamese Government expected to deal with MIA matters only on a 'government to government' basis. Second, media coverage generated by the authorities tended to focus on Defence efforts, without acknowledging OAH involvement.

After Parker and Gillson's recovery, the ADF was certainly not keen to have OAH take front running. Minister Billson suggested:

In the military ... you take your responsibilities seriously, but there's also a territorialism around those responsibilities: If that's my patch, I want to be all over it like a fat kid on a Smartie and so I suspect there might've been a bit of that.<sup>153</sup>

Efforts made to preclude OAH involvement in the in-country investigation of the Herbert and Carver cases relied on a fallacious argument about the Vietnamese Government's *modus operandi*. In May 2008, 'AHU convinced AFHQ [Air Force HQ] they had the contacts in Vietnam to do this work ... and [that] the Vietnam MIA [Department] only ... work 'Government to Government'.<sup>154</sup> Minister Snowdon made this point again in November 2008.<sup>155</sup> However, the argument that the Vietnamese Government did not work with civilian groups was manifestly incorrect. The authorities

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<sup>152</sup> K. Rudd, 'House of Representatives, 16 March: Australian Remains—Speech on the Recovery of Hudson and Moncrieff', Canberra, ACT, Commonwealth of Australia, Hansard, 2010, p. 2593.

<sup>153</sup> Billson, 'The recovery of Australian MIAs from Vietnam'.

<sup>154</sup> Elfverson, 'Research questions: Cooperation between RAAF HQ and Army History Unit'.

<sup>155</sup> W. Snowdon, 'Acknowledgement of the Operation Aussies Home report regarding the cases of Herbert and Carver', [letter to J. Bourke], 11 Nov. 2008, Canberra, ACT. Snowdon reiterated the point regarding the Vietnamese Government's alleged *modus operandi* in a Media Release two days later. W. Snowdon, 'Media Release dated 13 November 2008: Australia's last two Missing ADF Members in Vietnam', Department of Defence, Canberra, ACT, <www.defence.gov.au/minister/2008/081113.doc>, accessed 12 June 2012.



conveniently ignored the fact OAH were first to engage the Vietnamese Government in 2005. In addition, in 2008, Gary Flanagan responded in the affirmative to the question, 'Does the Vietnamese MIA office cooperate with private individuals or organisations from the United States on an on-going basis?'

YES. Although the Hanoi office always funnels the question through government channels they have responded to private inquiries and also to visits from VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars], American Legion, League of Families, Sons and Daughters in Touch, VVA [Vietnam Veterans of America], etc.<sup>156</sup>

After April 2007, Defence media coverage focused on the efforts of AHU and the RAAF. An article published in late 2008, dealing primarily with the recovery of Fisher, but which summarised the other three cases made no mention of the involvement of OAH.<sup>157</sup> The account on the Unrecovered War Casualties–Army (UWC–Army) website is misleading: 'Army commenced investigations to try and locate the missing men [from Vietnam]. Between 2007 and 2009, Unrecovered War Casualties successfully recovered all *four* soldiers'.<sup>158</sup> Defence quietly attempted to write OAH out of the history of the return of the Forgotten Six.

In conjunction with this media coverage, the authorities set about making the case they were capable and willing to attend the recovery of the men from Vietnam. Various individuals were keen to extol the virtues of the ADF's research methodologies, while conveniently forgetting OAH always handed over information to the authorities. Army made the point they had a policy of starting the investigation of cases afresh, regardless of what others had presented. Speaking about the Fisher investigation (2007–08), Brian Manns said, 'to be perfectly frank we had started an entirely new investigation. ... I think that by that stage we had enough expertise'.<sup>159</sup> Such an approach is admirable, but the wealth of data and the four case reports provided by OAH offered a significant springboard for these 'new investigations'.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Flanagan, 'Advice and offer of assistance (Herbert and Carver cases)'.

<sup>157</sup> Phuong Nguyen, 'Cooperative efforts brings last soldier from Vietnam War home', *Defence: The Official Magazine*, Issue No. 3, 2008, pp. 28–9.

<sup>158</sup> Unrecovered War Casualties–Army, 'Vietnam', Department of Defence, Canberra, ACT, <<http://www.army.gov.au/Our-work/Unrecovered-War-Casualties-Army/Vietnam>>, accessed 29 June 2012.

<sup>159</sup> Manns, 'ADF involvement in the recovery of Australian MIAs from Vietnam and other general MIA matters'.

<sup>160</sup> It is difficult to accept these 'new investigations' were undertaken *tabula rasa*, especially when the ADF investigators freely aired maps and documents provided by OAH, implying they created or uncovered such items themselves.

Some instances where the Government extolled their virtues were quite blatant. In March 2009 Minister Snowdon wrote, 'staff from the Defence Science and Technology Organisation have been asked to reconstruct the final flight of A84-231 using the tape recording [of the radio traffic] between call signs' to help predict the aircraft's LKP.<sup>161</sup> Minister Snowdon's media releases in November 2008 and April 2009 also reported on this 'innovative modelling'.<sup>162</sup> Continual reference to this 'innovative modelling' was fascinating given that the OAH report of September 2008 clearly established the methodology for predicting the LKP of A84-231.<sup>163</sup>

Why was this damage control necessary? Fundamentally, the authorities realised they had not done the right thing regarding the Vietnam MIAs and needed to refurbish their public image. Hugh Piper, the Director of the ABC documentary, *MIA: Missing-in-Action* summed up the situation regarding the bureaucracy's tardiness:

It is a significant, crime might be a strong word, but it's a significant omission in terms of Australia looking after its war dead that this [the non-recovery of the Vietnam MIAs] was allowed to go on for so long, and then eventually it was solved over a two year period.<sup>164</sup>

The extended recovery time related to the Forgotten Six can be best explained by the State's employment of anachronistic policies and the lack of official interest in MIA matters.

During the second half of the twentieth century, as we have seen, the tenets underpinning Australian policy regarding searching for the missing derived from experiences during the First World War. These policies did not acknowledge the progressive changes in the cultural and social environment within Australia. During 2002 to 2008, the members of the families of the Forgotten Six indicated they wanted

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<sup>161</sup> W. Snowdon, 'Progress on the Investigation of the Herbert and Carver Cases', [letter to J. Bourke], 10 Mar. 2009, Canberra, ACT.

<sup>162</sup> Snowdon, 'Media Release dated 13 November 2008: Australia's last two Missing ADF Members in Vietnam'; and, Snowdon, 'Media Release dated 21 April 2009: Wreckage of RAAF Aircraft found in Vietnam'.

<sup>163</sup> J. Bourke, 'MSS2135: Initial Report of an Investigation to Fully Account for O44310 Flying Officer Michael Patrick Herbert and O119223 Pilot Officer Robert Charles Carver Missing In Action (Believed Dead) in Viet Nam on 3 November 1970 (Compiled by Operation Aussies Home Inc. on behalf of the families of Herbert and Carver, dated 4 September)'. Merely as a point of interest, the LKP calculated in the OAH Report (Sept. 2008) was just over three km closer to the location where the wreckage was discovered, than was the LKP predicted by Defence Science and Technology Organisation in Mar. 2009.

<sup>164</sup> H. Piper, 'The recovery efforts associated with the six MIA personnel from Vietnam', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], 1 May 2010, Bondi Beach, NSW.

their kin recovered. Certainly, until 2006, the State and its functionaries lacked understanding of the wants and needs of these family members of the families of the Forgotten Six and this lack of understanding rendered the subject policies obsolescent. Even if individuals within the bureaucracy thought recovery of the Forgotten Six might have benefited members of their families, the anticipated degree of difficulty in locating the men's remains would have argued against mounting recovery operations.

Effectively, the ADF did not have the type of evidence their policy required for the initiation of official, publicly funded investigations of the cases of Fisher, Herbert and Carver. The policy that applied during 2007 and 2008 specifically addressed the 'the recovery and burial of human remains and ... [provided] guidelines for authorities receiving information on the location of possible ... remains of ADF members'.<sup>165</sup> Neither Army nor RAAF had any reports indicating *remains* of Fisher, Herbert and Carver had been located. The same situation applied with the two MIAs from Borneo.

In 2010, Army HQ explained why they set their policy aside to investigate the Fisher case:

Whilst no remains alleged to be those of PTE Fisher had been discovered prior to the commencement of the investigation into his loss, there was a large amount of information available. ... Army decided that every effort should be made to try and recover the remains of those still unaccounted for from the Vietnam War.<sup>166</sup>

The extant policy did not authorise such investigations. The ADF's stepping outside their policy indicated the extant policy was incapable. However, *policy is for fools to follow and for wise men to use as guidance*. We should heartily congratulate the authorities for setting their policy aside to investigate the cases of Fisher, Herbert, Carver, Hudson and Moncrieff.

Other recent recoveries demonstrate the reactive nature of the ADF's policies. First, after in-depth research initiated by Lambis Englezos in 2002, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission recovered and interred the remains of 250 'gallant war dead' from the Battle of Fromelles in the newly created Fromelles (Pheasant Wood) Military Cemetery on 19 July 2010.<sup>167</sup> Second, in 2010, Mr Donald Gubbay requested

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<sup>165</sup> Department of Defence, 'Defence Instruction (General) PERS 20-4: Missing-in-Action Presumed Killed: Recovery of Human Remains of Australian Defence Force Members', para. 2.

<sup>166</sup> Yeaman, 'A response to a request for information regarding certain MIA matters', pp. 1–2.

<sup>167</sup> Lindsay, *Fromelles: Australia's Darkest Day and the Dramatic Discovery of our Fallen World War One Diggers*; and, Department of Veterans' Affairs, 'Order of Service: Dedication and Burial: Fromelles (Pheasant Wood) Military Cemetery'.

assistance from OAH to search for his brother Lieutenant Alan Gubbay who, along with three other men, disappeared in April 1945 after a raid on Muschu Island, north of Wewak, PNG.<sup>168</sup> Army subsequently took over this investigation and through some excellent research and diligent fieldwork, resolved all four cases.<sup>169</sup> A third example is PTE John Whitworth, who went missing in the Celebes in June 1945. Mrs Vonnie Fletcher lamented the loss of her cousin, John. Mrs Fletcher's daughter started researching Whitworth's case and asked for OAH assistance in early 2011. Army later took this case over and the end-result was Whitworth's remains, and those of two of his comrades were located, buried as unknowns in the Bomana War Cemetery in PNG.<sup>170</sup> Hence, purposeful research by private individuals and/or requests for assistance from concerned relatives of the missing triggered these recoveries. The ADF still does not initiate investigations of its own volition; however, when presented with a specific case, they are enthusiastic and capable.

Hence, the ADF's policy on MIA matters was entirely reactive and out of date. These anachronistic policies contributed significantly to the delay in the recovery of the Forgotten Six, for 36 years or more.

Furthermore, lack of interest in the Forgotten Six within the ADF and the Government also contributed appreciably to the delay in recovering the men. There were two reasons for the bureaucracy's initial lack of interest. First, emotional baggage from the Vietnam War affected the collective thinking within the ADF. Second, the political masters of the time did not see the recovery of the Forgotten Six as an issue that warranted their consideration.

Australia was on the losing side during the War and the associated emotional baggage inhibited the 'Vietnam MIAs' recovery. Air Marshal Binskin pointed out 'In some ways I guess post Vietnam ... there were a lot of people in the system that were still getting over Vietnam'.<sup>171</sup> General Leahy supported Air Marshal Binskin:

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<sup>168</sup> NAA: B883: NX82924; and, D. Dennis, *The Guns of Muschu*, Sydney, NSW, Allen & Unwin, 2006, pp. 101–10.

<sup>169</sup> McPhedran, 'A WWII digger's family searching for his final resting place has found the army knew all along where he was buried—Just let us lay our war hero brother to rest'; and, McPhedran, 'Wartime mystery'.

<sup>170</sup> McPhedran, 'Mystery that broke a mothers heart'.

<sup>171</sup> Binskin and Cotterell, 'RAAF involvement in the recovery of Australian MIAs from Vietnam and other general MIA matters'.

[The recovery of the MIAs from Vietnam] wasn't something that ... was front of mind for people around [at] that time ... because I think, as I said, that was Vietnam, we were pushing that aside.<sup>172</sup>

Hence, until 2007 the level of interest within the ADF regarding the Vietnam MIAs was not sufficient to trigger action. In any case, the existing policies allowed the authorities to sidestep active investigations, thereby obviating the need to revisit the delicate topic of the Vietnam War. However, by 2007 the injection of 'new blood' into the ADF hierarchy, which happened with the progression of time, coupled with OAH lobbying, redressed this issue.

Australia sent an official mission to Vietnam in 1984 but the Australian Government did not subsequently pursue any of the six cases, until pressured into doing so. Minister Griffin explained a possible reason for the Government's lack of action:

There tends to be a view I think within military and bureaucratic circles that 'if it ... [isn't broken] then don't fix it', and if there is no real pressure and need to take action, then why would you?<sup>173</sup>

Hence, after 1984, the Forgotten Six were not an issue politicians considered worthy of attention.

The bureaucracy's attitudes toward MIA matters changed for the better over the years from 2007 to 2010. In 2009 and 2010, the ADF revised its policy on recovery operations. On 1 July 2010, Army established the UWC–Army, with a mission 'to account for Army's unrecovered war dead'.<sup>174</sup> The unit remains constrained by policy and possibly by a lack of resources. Apart from reacting to information provided by others there does not appear to be any substantive output from this unit to date.

## ***SUMMARY OF 'ATTENDING TO UNFINISHED BUSINESS'***

The following summarises the discussion regarding 'attending to unfinished business'.

The OAH Project came into being in 2002, mainly as a reaction to the ADF's recalcitrant stance regarding the Forgotten Six. A number of fortuitous events abetted the Project. First, in April 2003, the staff at CILHI provided information that lead to OAH

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<sup>172</sup> Leahy, 'ADF involvement in the recovery of Australian MIAs from Vietnam and other general MIA matters'.

<sup>173</sup> Griffin, 'The recovery of Australian MIAs from Vietnam'.

<sup>174</sup> Yeaman, 'A response to a request for information regarding certain MIA matters'.

making contact with a Vietnamese witness, Mr Nguyen Van Bao, who provided valuable information related to Parker and Gillson. Second, in 2006, a number of private individuals donated money, \$40,000 in one instance and this encouraged the Government to provide further funding and support.

A number of veterans quietly opposed the idea of investigating some of the cases, especially that of Gillespie but the main opposition initially came from the interconnections between the Government, the ADF and the ESO. The authorities' lack of engagement with the families allowed OAH to gain access to the field and the Association's lobbying and investigative activities during 2002 to 2007 effectively dismantled the connections that existed within the bureaucracy and with the ESOs.

In April 2007, OAH was exclusively responsible for the in-country work to recover the remains of Parker and Gillson. These recoveries demonstrated the possibility of recovering some, if not all of the Forgotten Six and shoehorned the authorities into taking action. The Government and the ADF progressively demonstrated a more responsive attitude, and within a mere 27 months after Parker and Gillson's recovery, with some assistance from and lobbying by OAH, the ADF recovered the other four members of the Forgotten Six. Once the authorities were engaged, they showed the tenacity and skill required to resolve the remaining cases. However, the consensus was without the involvement of OAH nobody would have found the Forgotten Six, and certainly not before 2009.

From early 2002, the families of Parker, Gillson and Carver were comfortable with OAH's investigations. During 2006 to 2008, the families of Gillespie and Herbert subsequently engaged with OAH and the authorities, while Fisher's family worked exclusively with the ADF. OAH was initially not aware what the families really wanted done, but neither was the Government. The salient action taken by the families was to agree to, or request investigation of their cases even though such actions jeopardised their existing states of closure. This action revealed the underlying aspirations of most members of the families of the Forgotten Six—to recover the men's remains.

Employment of anachronistic policies and the lack of official interest delayed the recovery of the Forgotten Six for 36 years or more. Much to their credit, the ADF set aside its existing policy on MIA matters, a policy that was incapable, to recover Fisher, Herbert and Carver from Vietnam and Hudson and Moncrieff from Borneo. In 2010, Army took the positive step of establishing a dedicated unit, the UWC—Army to account for Army's unrecovered war dead, although this unit has yet to demonstrate its effectiveness. Nevertheless, the redemptive upswing in the authorities' attitude toward

MIA matters means the actions of the politicians and the generals now more closely reflect their rhetoric.

## CHAPTER 6: 'REPOSITIONING THE DEAD'

### ***INTRODUCTION***

Over the three years from 2007 to 2009, as OAH and later the ADF recovered the remains of the Forgotten Six, their families and comrades progressively faced the prospect of 'repositioning the dead'. During this period, some family members necessarily interacted with the authorities and OAH.

This Chapter explores the often emotionally charged actions and interactions of the associated family members and comrades of the Forgotten Six from 2007 to 2009, focusing on the recovery operations, and the men's repatriations and their funerals. We will also examine a number of issues that arose during this period. First, the enhanced levels of closure available to family members and comrades are discussed. Second, the thread of healing that emerged among those close to the Forgotten Six and within the veteran community more generally, will be considered. Third, attention is invited to the way in which those involved in the men's recovery, repatriation and commemoration created or adjusted their narratives, enshrining their version of events and their concomitant emotions. Fourth, comment is offered regarding the significance of the hierarchy of grief within the families.

It should be remembered that although some individuals, including members of OAH may have been desirous of recovering the Forgotten Six, in the final analysis, the need to 'reposition' the dead arose *only* because the families agreed to or requested investigation of their cases; and, as a consequence the men's remains were located and returned home to Australia. Without the families' sanction, recovery of the six men would not have eventuated. Hence, the families' aspirations constituted the primary and inviolable causal condition that necessitated 'repositioning the dead'.

### ***CHANGING-OF-THE-GUARD***

By 2002, because of the death of most of the birth parents and some siblings related to the Forgotten Six, there was a changing-of-the-guard within the families.<sup>1</sup> Table 6–1 consolidates the relevant attributes of the persons of interest within the associated families, focusing on the period from 2002 to 2011. As Table 6–1 indicates, the families were widely dispersed, which inhibited on-going interactions.

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix C outlines the structures of the six affected families from 2002 to 2012.



**Table 6–1: Attributes of Persons of Interest within the Families (2002–12)**

<b>MIA FAMILY</b>	<b>FAMILY MEMBERS AND ATTRIBUTES</b>
Parker	Wendy Mudford, Parker's widow lived in Napier, NZ with her new husband. Parker's sister, Pat Woodland, who never met her sister-in-law until 2002, was living in Batlow, NSW. Woodland's husband of 43 years died in Oct. 1997.
Gillson	Gillson's widow, Lorraine Easton re-married in June 1967 but was divorced in Dec. 1986, and was living at Picton, NSW. Besides Robert Gillson Jr, Easton had another son, Craig Hawes from her second marriage. In 2002, Robert Gillson was living in London working as an accountant. He returned to Australia in Mar. 2004.
Fisher	Ann Cowdroy, Fisher's sister was living in Pymble, NSW. Julia and Penelope, Fisher's stepsister and half-sister respectively, lived in NSW. Fisher's stepmother, Margaret was still alive.
Herbert	In 2002, Joan, John and Shane Herbert, the parents and brother of Michael Herbert respectively, were living in the family home in Glenelg North, SA. Kerry Herbert, Michael Herbert's sister was living in Victoria. Neither of the parents was in the best of health. After the death of Mrs Herbert in Jan. 2003, Shane Herbert cared for his father who was suffering Alzheimer's and a heart condition.
Carver	Bill Carver, the brother of Robert Carver also suffered from Alzheimer's from around 1998. In 2002, Bill Carver and his wife, Susanna lived in Rosedale, Qld and in 2008, moved to Underwood, Qld.
Gillespie	In 2002, Carmel Hendrie, Gillespie's widow was in a long-term relationship with Ron Hendrie, a Vietnam veteran. The couple lived in Glenella, Qld and subsequently moved to Curra, Qld. They eventually married in June 2006. Fiona Pike, the daughter of John Gillespie and Carmel Hendrie, lived in NSW. Christine Gillespie, John Gillespie's sister lived in Melbourne, Vic. In 2008, Christine Gillespie was diagnosed with leukaemia.

Although most members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades accepted the men were dead, questions remained about the extent of their suffering, whether the Vietnamese had captured any of them, and the location of their remains. By 2002, most family members did not expect anybody would investigate their cases or attempt to recover the men's remains. For example and as a result, Robert Gillson Jr 'had no hopes after this amount of time that ... [his father would] ever be found'.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, before Fisher's recovery, his sister, Ann Cowdroy 'didn't believe she would

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<sup>2</sup> Gillson Jr, 'Having a father (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

ever see her brother come home'.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, despite these views and perceptions there was the forlorn hope that someday, somebody might discover the remains of some of the men. For example, Gillson's widow, Lorraine Easton indicated: 'Oh definitely, I wanted him recovered'.<sup>4</sup> However, the recovery of remains was not necessarily the outcome all family members either required or expected, with most members of the Gillespie family being typical examples.<sup>5</sup>

By 2002, some of the men's comrades had died.<sup>6</sup> The survivors in contrast were between 53 and 63 years of age and had reached a stage in their lives where they had time to reflect on the men's loss and non-recovery. This unfinished business troubled some, but they were not expecting the Government or anybody else to investigate the cases of the Forgotten Six.

The ADF policy published in 1996 made it clear 'The ADF retains responsibility for the recovery of human remains of ADF members killed in conflict'.<sup>7</sup> Members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades generally held the view that the Government was responsible for investigating MIA cases and recovering remains.

In 2002, Carmel Hendrie made it clear searching for her former husband was a Government responsibility, but also indicated the matter was finalised from her family's point of view:

Unless the Australian ... [Government] formally request information from my family, and even then we will access [sic] the request, this matter is now finalised as far as we are concerned.<sup>8</sup>

In contrast, Robert Gillson Jr opined 'Australia had a responsibility to find any trace of men who paid the ultimate sacrifice for their nation'.<sup>9</sup> Barry Carpenter, a

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<sup>3</sup> R. Young, 'Homecomings ease pain of Vietnam War', *Canberra Times*, 19 Aug. 2009, <<http://ezproxy.slv.vic.gov.au/login/docview/427782788?accountid=13905>>, accessed 11 Feb. 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Easton, 'Having a husband (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

<sup>5</sup> As mentioned earlier, Christine Gillespie said that in 2006 the family would have been satisfied by the Government saying 'there were no remains', so that family members could get on with their lives. Gillespie, 'Having a brother (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>6</sup> Colin Fawcett who, as Gillson's Platoon Sergeant endeavoured to retrieve Gillson's body on 8 Nov. 1965, died in 1994 as had John Healy, the Company Commander of A Company 1 RAR from 1965.

<sup>7</sup> Department of Defence, 'Defence Instruction (General) PERS 20-4: Missing-in-Action Presumed Killed: Recovery of Human Remains of Australian Defence Force Members', para. 9.

<sup>8</sup> C. Hendrie, 'Family aspirations regarding the investigation of the case John Gillespie', [letter to J. Bourke], 29 Nov. 2002, Glenella, Qld.

comrade of Herbert similarly felt the Government was responsible for recovering the Forgotten Six:

It's got to have been lack of resolve and lack of interest, I guess and it's got to go back to the Government's court. It can't go any further than that.<sup>10</sup>

During 2007 to 2009, while OAH and the ADF searched for the Forgotten Six, nobody could guarantee the recovery of their remains. Nevertheless, all families progressively engaged with the prospect of 'repositioning the dead', hoping to enhance their extant levels of closure.

Before the men's recovery, family members and comrades experienced levels of closure that were obviously sub-optimal. These individuals accepted these earlier levels of closure because of a number of factors. First, from the First World War until the late 1970s, prevailing attitudes in Australia endorsed a culture of death denial and stoicism. Second, during the second half of the twentieth century, the Australian Government showed little interest in recovering MIAs, including the Forgotten Six. Third, until 1966 Australian Defence Force policy, supported by the public endorsed the burial of service personnel killed overseas in the nearest Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemetery.

Nevertheless, during the late 1970s, within a changing cultural, intellectual and social climate that encouraged 'greater freedom of emotional expression', Australians began to express their grief more openly.<sup>11</sup> Hence, by 2000, prevailing cultural and societal expectations provided an environment in which members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades felt the need for action, and consequently cooperated with OAH and the authorities to seek answers regarding the men's fate.

## **EXTERNAL FACTORS**

From 2002 to 2008, various external factors influenced the actions and interactions of members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades regarding

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<sup>9</sup> Rindfleisch, 'We must find forgotten six'. However, Gillson was not concerned with who did the searching but 'wanted whoever it was, whether it was the government or private individuals ... to go over and see what they could see'. Gillson Jr, 'Having a father (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

<sup>10</sup> Carpenter, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Michael Herbert)'.

<sup>11</sup> Jalland, *Changing Ways of Death in Twentieth-Century Australia: War, Medicine and the Funeral Business*, p. 351.

'repositioning the dead'. Particularly important were the activities of the media and a number of commemorative activities.

OAH used the media to provide a public face for the Association and to draw attention to the Forgotten Six. Sometimes the media acted unilaterally in reporting the progress of investigations and subsequent recoveries and repatriations. Generally, the media presented a balanced account of events by incorporating the views of the men's families and comrades, OAH, the Government and the ADF. The release in October 2007 of two episodes of *Australian Story*, 'Behind Enemy Lines', was an unexpected and beneficial media coup for OAH.<sup>12</sup> In addition, from 2002 the OAH website informed visitors about the progress of efforts to fully account for the Forgotten Six.<sup>13</sup>

Initially, there was limited contact between the MIA families and the men's comrades, but an increase in contact coincided with the Welcome Home Parade in 1987 and the dedication of the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial in 1992. Commencing in 2002, a series of commemorative activities, as shown in Table 6–2 indicated the veteran community and the standing force had not forgotten the men and their families.

Possibly, the most significant of these activities was the 'street-naming' ceremony conducted at Baldivis in WA in August 2006. Pete Ramsay, as President of the Western Australian Branch of the VVAA effectively established the basis for a community of mourning, by bringing some family members and some of the men's comrades together at this ceremony.<sup>14</sup> As Carmel Hendrie noted, the families were all in the same situation'.<sup>15</sup> Participants appreciated the activity: Robert Gillson Jr felt it 'was a lovely ceremony'.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Hawkins, 'Behind Enemy Lines: Part 1'; and, Hawkins, 'Behind Enemy Lines: Part 2'.

<sup>13</sup> J. Bourke and A. Bourke, 'The Purpose of Establishing this Website [OAH Website]', Operation Aussies Home, Wantirna, Vic., Internet Archive's Wayback Machine <<http://web.archive.org/web/20040812115056/http://austmia.com/Purpose.htm>>, accessed 20 July 2012. Although we did not conceive the site as a means of energising the families or the men's comrades, from 2002 to 2009 a sprinkling of family members and some comrades accessed the website to apprise themselves of what was happening regarding the six cases.

<sup>14</sup> The families turned out in force, with 34 family members attending. P. Ramsay, 'Remembering those missing in action at Long Tan', [Interviewed by Rebecca Carmody], 18 August 2006, Perth, WA, Stateline, Australian Broadcasting Commission, <<http://www.abc.net.au/stateline/wa/content/2006/s1719739.htm>>, accessed 1 Aug. 2012.

<sup>15</sup> Hendrie, 'Having a husband (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>16</sup> Gillson Jr, 'Having a father (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

**Table 6–2: Commemorative Activities (2002–06)**

YEAR	OUTLINE OF ACTIVITIES
2002	A plaque was installed at the SAS Regiment's barracks at Swanbourne, WA to commemorate the Regiment's dead and missing. On 26 July 2002, the Regiment held a memorial service for their three MIA: Hudson and Moncrieff from Borneo, and Fisher from Vietnam. <sup>17</sup>
2002	On 28 July 2002, Mathew D'Arcy, a former member of 1 RAR led an expedition to the general area of the Parker and Gillson loss incident. <sup>18</sup> D'Arcy installed two memorial headstones marking the locations where he believed the men were killed. <sup>19</sup> Although not publicised, except on the OAH website, at least some members of Gillson's family and some of Parker and Gillson's comrades learned of, and expressed appreciation of D'Arcy's efforts.
2002	On 10 Dec. 2002, the gates to Sacred Heart College, Somerton Park, SA, Michael Herbert's old school were dedicated to 'the memory of Michael Patrick Herbert and all past students ... who gave their lives for Australia in war and peace'.
2004	In Oct. 2004, at Lavarack Barracks in Townsville, Qld, 1 RAR dedicated a 'Training Facility' in memory of Gillson and Parker, in the form of a stand-alone building to be used for instructional purposes. <sup>20</sup>
2005	In Aug. 2005, the Totally & Partially Disabled Veterans of WA Inc. planted six Rottnest Island Pines in a Memorial Grove they established at Baldivis, WA. Besides being a commemoration, this activity was intended to encourage the Government to account for the Forgotten Six.
2006	In Apr. 2006, at the ANZAC Assembly at Sydney Grammar School, David Fisher's old school remembered him. <sup>21</sup> Members of Fisher's family attended this ceremony.
2006	In Aug. 2006, under the auspice of the WA branch of the VVAA, as part of a new sub-development at Baldivis, WA, six streets were named after the Forgotten Six.

Recalling memories of the men through commemorative activities assisted in developing comfortable social spaces for the dead and in some instances contributed

<sup>17</sup> D. Lewis, 'Foreword', *Rendezvous, Journal of The Australian Special Air Service Association*, Vol. 23, Issue of July 2002, p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> M. B. D'Arcy, 'Report on an Expedition to Hill 82 Area by Mathew B. D'Arcy and Party on 28 July 2002', Operation Aussies Home Inc., <<http://web.archive.org/web/20060819101005/http://austmia.com/DoneSoFar.html>>, accessed 1 Mar. 2015.

<sup>19</sup> The locations determined by D'Arcy were about 1.5 km southwest by west of the site where Parker and Gillson were actually buried, but installing these markers was an exceedingly thoughtful act on the part of D'Arcy.

<sup>20</sup> The inscription on the dedication plaque gives the details of the loss incident and makes mention of the memorial headstones erected by D'Arcy.

<sup>21</sup> Anon., 'Grim discovery ends Vietnam mystery', *Grammar Foundations: Newsletter of the Sydney Grammar School*, Issue No. 39, 2008, p.5.

appreciably toward emotional closure. For example, Bill Denny, a confidante of the Herbert family recalled talking with Joan Herbert, Michael Herbert's mother, after the ceremony at Sacred Heart College on 10 December 2002:

[Mrs Herbert said] 'My life's work is done; now I can go in peace'. ... [Denny believed that] the timing of that ceremony, in terms of providing some form of closure for her, was very significant.<sup>22</sup>

Mrs Herbert died seven weeks later, on 24 January 2003.

These external factors refreshed the profiles of the Forgotten Six, not only among members of the men's families and their comrades, but also within the standing force and the wider community, thereby stimulating interest in possible recovery operations.

## **ACTIONS/INTERACTIONS**

From 2002 to 2009, members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades took action as they contemplated the prospect of 'repositioning the dead', interacting with OAH, and with the Government and the ADF as necessary.

From 2002, the Parker, Gillson and Carver families cooperated with OAH, and the families of Gillespie and Herbert engaged with OAH in 2006 and 2008 respectively. The Fisher family dealt directly with the authorities, starting in 2007.

Effectively, interaction between the families, and the Government and the ADF did not begin in earnest until August 2006, when the Gillespie family approached the Government and requested investigation of their case. Before 2006, the families' experiences with the authorities generally resulted in feelings of alienation and despair and they felt little or no connection with the Government and/or the ADF. Because the authorities failed to engage effectively with the families until at least 2006, the bureaucracy possessed little understanding of the needs and wants of the members of the families and the men's comrades. After 2006, the tone and intensity of interactions between each of the families and the authorities varied, but in the early stages, these interactions were often not harmonious, especially with the Herbert and Gillespie families.

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<sup>22</sup> Denny, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Michael Herbert)'.

During the street naming ceremony in Baldivis in August 2006, a Department of Veterans' Affairs representative indicated the Minister's office was in discussions with the Gillespie family. Carmel Hendrie retorted, 'This is incorrect. We had not heard from you at all'.<sup>23</sup> Later, after the family opened dialogue with the Government, Christine Gillespie, John Gillespie's sister 'felt that ... [she] wasn't really getting enough information and ... was getting very angry'.<sup>24</sup> Ms Gillespie felt insecure when it came to dealing with the Government:

I was ... constantly paranoid about being steam-rolled by the Government because they didn't communicate successfully that they were on our side, which I still resent and so I thought ... they were in a plot to sideline us.<sup>25</sup>

In April 2009, Michael Herbert's brother, Shane greeted the news that his brother's plane (but not his remains) had been found with mixed emotions. As Herbert recalled, 'It wasn't euphoria first'.<sup>26</sup> He was apprehensive 'human remains ... may not be found, but one body may be found [as opposed to both Herbert and Carver]'.<sup>27</sup> Herbert wanted to have OAH represented on the RAAF Team that was to excavate the crash site 'so that ... [he] ... could feel that whatever took place was done to the very best of the potential of the people involved'.<sup>28</sup>

Hence, disharmony and a lack of trust initially characterised the relationships between the authorities, and the Gillespie and Herbert families.

As recovery operations progressed, OAH and the authorities necessarily passed details to the families. In April 2007, when OAH discovered Parker and Gillson's remains, I personally passed the news about the discovery to the families and others. On the evening of Saturday, 1 December 2007 Minister Billson contacted Army HQ to obtain details of the successful Gillespie recovery operation and passed the information to Gillespie's widow. Because of the requirements of the extant POA the RAAF, much to their chagrin, were initially obliged to pass the details of finding Herbert

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<sup>23</sup> Gillespie, Hendrie and Pike, 'John Gillespie MIA'.

<sup>24</sup> Hawkins, 'Behind Enemy Lines: Part 2', Christine Gillespie, 17 min.

<sup>25</sup> Gillespie, 'Having a brother (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>26</sup> Herbert, 'Having a brother (Michael Herbert) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. RAAF reneged on their offer to allow OAH representation on the Excavation Team but subsequently acquiesced, under pressure.

and Carver's aircraft, and details of the subsequent recovery of Herbert and Carver's remains to the families through me.

Learning of the discovery of remains refreshed the sense of loss and evoked some intense emotions. Carmel Hendrie recalled this resurgence of emotions when Minister Billson phoned her at 9.45 pm on 1 December 2007:<sup>29</sup>

'Oh my God where do we go from here? ... I've gotta take this all in I've got to take this in' and he [Billson] was very concerned [and] he said, 'Are you right are you going to be able to deal with it?' I said, 'I'm gunna have to deal with it aren't I? ... I tried to deal with it 37 years ago so I'm gunna have to deal with it now'.<sup>30</sup>

Hendrie then rang her daughter, Fiona Pike and Christine Gillespie but 'couldn't ring the others because ... [she] was too emotionally drained'.<sup>31</sup>

These emotional overtones made it difficult for some of those close to the men to discuss the recoveries. In early May 2007, two weeks after I called Wendy Mudford, Parker's widow to tell her the news she 'was [still] too emotional to talk about the discovery [of her former husband's remains]'.<sup>32</sup> Lorraine Easton shunned the media. After OAH found Gillson's remains but before their repatriation, Robert Gillson Jr tried to broker an interview between the ABC *Australian Story* producers and his mother. Easton told her son, 'I can't do this; I can't go through these emotions before bringing Peter home and it's Peter's story. I can't do this'.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, in most cases the families initially preferred to avoid discussing the recoveries, especially with the media. In due course Defence public relations staff stepped in to shield the families from unwanted attention.

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<sup>29</sup> The Coalition lost government in the Federal Election of Nov. 2007 and Billson was in the process of vacating his office on 1 Dec. I ascertained that the searchers had recovered remains from the Gillespie site in late Nov. and suggested to Billson he should be the one to pass the news to the family. Billson's taking the time to inform Gillespie's widow of the recovery of her late husband's remains reflected his level of compassion and his dedication to resolving the MIA issue. Alan Griffin followed Bruce Billson as Minister for Veterans' Affairs in the new Government and showed the same level of commitment as demonstrated by Billson.

<sup>30</sup> Hendrie, 'Having a husband (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> M. Dobbin, "Vietnam remains confirmed as those of missing Aust soldiers", *Canberra Times*, 1 May 2007, p. 3.

<sup>33</sup> Easton, 'Having a husband (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.



### **The 'most exciting most happiest time in over 40 years'**

In contrast, many experienced relief, excitement and other positive emotions on receipt of the news that the searchers recovered remains. Pat Woodland, Parker's sister, recalled, 'I was really thrilled to think that you'd found them'.<sup>34</sup> Lorraine Easton recalled the day in April 2007 when told of the discovery of her former husband's remains: 'I was just over the moon. Over the moon, I was. ... It was the most exciting, most happiest time in over 40 years'.<sup>35</sup>

### **'Totally, totally shocked'**

Nevertheless, receiving the news of the recoveries shocked some family members. For example, Fiona Pike was 'totally, totally shocked':<sup>36</sup>

It is very difficult for me to explain to people how all this [the recovery of her father] affects me ... I did not feel any glee or happiness when I heard his body had been found.<sup>37</sup>

Prior to the discoveries, some family members contemplated other possible outcomes. For example, Christine Gillespie reflected:

It would've been easier in some ways, in the sense of avoidance to have just had no remains found, and some statement that ... this is the site and let's just forget it all from now on.<sup>38</sup>

Ms Gillespie considered what might have appeared an easier option in the short-term. Robert Gillson Jr also contemplated other possible outcomes, 'I was always weighing up the two reactions—the what if Dad was never found, which I was really okay with, and the what if Dad was found'.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, on hearing human remains had been recovered but not identified, Shane Herbert felt resigned to accepting the outcome, 'I

<sup>34</sup> Woodland, 'Having a brother (Richard Parker) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

<sup>35</sup> Easton, 'Having a husband (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

<sup>36</sup> Pike, 'Having a father (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'. Similarly, Christine Gillespie 'was stunned, absolutely stunned'. Gillespie, 'Having a brother (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>37</sup> A. Hardie, 'Medic's body comes home', *Maitland Mercury*, 19 Dec. 2007, sec. General News, p. 4.

<sup>38</sup> Gillespie, 'Having a brother (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>39</sup> Gillson Jr, 'Having a father (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

really had surrendered my expectation and was quite at peace with whatever took place'.<sup>40</sup> Consideration of alternative scenarios showed that these members of the Gillespie, Gillson and Herbert families had embraced the concept of 'full accounting' as explained to them by OAH. Having their cases properly investigated was potentially just as important as recovering remains. Nevertheless, the recovery of the remains of all of the Forgotten Six was extremely convenient, because all families benefited equally.

The comrades' reactions to the discoveries varied—but most were positive and emotional. Bill Host, a friend of Gillespie recalled, 'I was like a bloody big girl. Yeah, I just cried, I did'.<sup>41</sup> Greg Weekes, a friend of Robert Carver on hearing remains of Herbert and Carver had been recovered 'wept a few tears'.<sup>42</sup>

For many years, some comrades hoped for a favourable outcome and understandably felt relief and satisfaction on hearing of the recovery of the men's remains. Gordon Peterson, Parker's Acting Platoon Commander in November 1965 recalled hearing about the recovery of Parker and Gillson: 'It was something that you've been looking forward to for so long ... getting a result I just felt it was ... a real fantastic feeling'.<sup>43</sup> Other comrades reported similar positive emotions.<sup>44</sup>

However, some found it difficult to accept the recoveries were successful. Clive Williams, Gillson's Platoon Commander from 1965, on hearing the news that OAH recovered Gillson acknowledged:

I was really blown away by it and it took me a few days to really come to terms with it. ... To actually have found the remains I thought was just incredible'.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Herbert, 'Having a brother (Michael Herbert) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'.

<sup>41</sup> Host, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally John Gillespie)'.

<sup>42</sup> Weekes, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Robert Carver)'.

<sup>43</sup> Peterson, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Richard Parker)'.

<sup>44</sup> Zegers, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally John Gillespie)'; O'Brien, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally John Gillespie)'; Saxton, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally David Fisher)'; and, Liddington, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally David Fisher)'.

<sup>45</sup> Williams, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Peter Gillson)'. Williams obviously thought more quickly than I did. In 2007, when talking about Parker and Gillson I admitted, 'Finding them was one thing, but even when I came back to Australia I couldn't come to grips for about three weeks [with the fact] that we had actually found them'. E. Sherlock, 'New MIA search', *Sunday Canberra Times*, 19 August 2007, p. 3.

Hearing about the discovery of remains caused some to reflect on the feelings of others. When Susanna Carver, Robert Carver's sister-in-law heard the searchers located some of Carver's remains she immediately thought of his parents.<sup>46</sup> The comrades' thoughts often went out to the families. Les Maher, who was involved in the Gillespie loss incident 'was particularly glad [but] more so ... for ... [Gillespie's] family'.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, John Cuzens, a comrade of Fisher, while preparing to travel to Hanoi to escort Fisher's coffin back to Australia expressed the hope that this 'final mission ... [would] bring closure to Private Fisher's family and himself'.<sup>48</sup>

Initially, the loss incident sites provided temporary foci for grief and other emotions. For instance, the habit of some OAH members to recite the Ode and to leave poppies at the loss incident locations centered their emotions on these sites. The loss incident locations also provided a focal point for the grief of some family members. In September 2007, before the Government Team recovered Gillespie's remains, Christine Gillespie, accompanied by an ABC film crew and two members of OAH visited the Gillespie crash site. Ms Gillespie left a note for her brother, 'Dear John, rest in peace with love ... Your sister, Christine'.<sup>49</sup> Lorraine Easton, on learning of the discovery of her former husband's remains in April 2007 expressed an attachment to the site: 'I actually wanted to go to the site where my husband died'.<sup>50</sup> Robert Gillson Jr also felt the site was 'highly significant', noting 'Dad's where he should be now, but that's where he was for all those years'.<sup>51</sup>

Upon recovery of remains, the authorities, in conjunction with the families arranged the repatriations and funerals.<sup>52</sup> After the Vietnamese authorities concurred with the initial identifications made by the Australian forensic experts, family representatives and

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<sup>46</sup> Susanna Carver recalled, 'My mind just went straight to mum and dad Carver, you see, I never knew Robert. ... The only person that I knew that was hurt and upset by that whole thing were mum and dad Carver'. Carver, 'Having a brother-in-law (Robert Carver) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'.

<sup>47</sup> Maher, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally John Gillespie)'.

<sup>48</sup> Ferguson, 'Homecoming: sad duty for SAS veteran', p. 2.

<sup>49</sup> Gillespie, 'Having a brother (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>50</sup> Hawkins, 'Behind Enemy Lines: Part 1', Lorraine Easton, 22 min.

<sup>51</sup> Gillson Jr, 'Having a father (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

<sup>52</sup> The complexity of the arrangements required to repatriate the men necessitated direct Government involvement and family members needed professional emotional support. OAH quickly transitioned the five families who dealt with the Association, those of Parker, Gillson, Gillespie, Herbert and Carver, to the ADF.

selected veterans, accompanied by various officials travelled to Vietnam.<sup>53</sup> The Australian Embassy in Hanoi and the Vietnamese authorities organised a series of dignified ceremonies, conducted at the Noi Bai Airport outside of Hanoi, where the Australian party accepted the coffins containing the men's remains.

RAAF C130 Hercules aircraft then transported the coffins, suitably escorted, back to Australia with the first port of call being Darwin, Northern Territory. Some members of the families of Parker, Gillson and Gillespie travelled to Darwin for quiet time with the coffins. The aircraft carrying the coffins and the escorts resumed their journeys late in the evening, with the flights timed to arrive at 10 am at Richmond, New South Wales for Parker and Gillson, and at Point Cook, Victoria for Gillespie. The Fisher, Herbert and Carver families did not gather in Darwin and after re-fuelling and a brief respite, the aircraft carrying the coffins flew to Richmond, with a target time of arrival of 10 am.<sup>54</sup> Table 6–3 provides a schedule of the men's repatriations.

**Table 6–3: Schedule of the Repatriations of the Forgotten Six**

DECEDENT AND YEAR	VENUES AND DATES			
	HANOI	DARWIN	RICHMOND	POINT COOK
Parker and Gillson (2007)	4 June	5 June	6 June	
Gillespie (2007)	17 Dec.	18 Dec.		19 Dec.
Fisher (2008)	8 Oct.	9 Oct.	10 Oct.	
Herbert and Carver (2009)	29–30 Aug.	31 Aug.	1 Sept.	

Lorraine Easton, Robert Gillson Jr and Craig Hawes, Easton's son from her second marriage made the journey to Hanoi. Robert Gillson Jr and I, along with three comrades of Parker and Gillson from 1965, Gordon Peterson, Clive Williams and

<sup>53</sup> Ministers Billson, Griffin and Snowdon represented the Government for the repatriations of Parker and Gillson, Gillespie, and Fisher respectively. The Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Support, Mike Kelly, was the Government representative at the Herbert and Carver hand-back ceremony. The family members and dignitaries generally travelled to and from Vietnam in the Government's VIP Boeing 737 aircraft, operated by No. 34 Squadron RAAF. The exception was Robert Gillson Jr, who made the return journey seated next to his father's coffin in the back of a RAAF C130 aircraft.

<sup>54</sup> The aircraft carrying the coffins of Herbert and Carver left Darwin according to schedule on the night of 31 Aug. /1 Sept. but because of a serious electrical failure about 30 minutes into the flight, the plane returned to Darwin. Fortunately, the RAAF had arranged for a back-up Hercules, which tailed the first aircraft to and from Vietnam. The coffins were transferred quickly and the journey resumed.

Trevor Hagan escorted Parker and Gillson's coffins back to Richmond. Carmel Hendrie and Fiona Pike made the journey to Hanoi. Peter Aylett, an OAH member was closely involved in the Gillespie case and the family invited Aylett and me to escort Gillespie's coffin back to Australia. Representatives of David Fisher's family, his sister Ann Cowdroy, his half-sister Penny and Fisher's brother-in-law (Ann Cowdroy's husband) travelled to Hanoi accompanied by a number of Fisher's former friends and comrades, who escorted Fisher's coffin back to Australia.<sup>55</sup> Shane Herbert was the only representative of his family to travel to Hanoi. Susanna Carver, her son Adam and his wife Nicole represented the Carver family in Hanoi. A number of Herbert and Carver's comrades, including John Bird travelled to Hanoi to escort the coffins home. The families invited Bill Denny and me to accompany them on the trip, and we travelled both ways in the comfort of the Government jet.

Wendy Mudford, Parker's widow and Pat Woodland, Parker's sister did not travel to Hanoi for the hand-back of Parker's remains. Similarly, Gillson's brother, Robert Gillson Snr did not make the journey.<sup>56</sup> In order to arrange her brother's funeral, Christine Gillespie stayed in Melbourne and did not travel to Hanoi or to Darwin. Herbert's sister, Kerryn Herbert chose not to travel to Hanoi or to Richmond. The emotion surrounding the trip to Hanoi contributed to some deciding not to undertake the journey. The sight of the old workhorse from the Vietnam days, the C130 Hercules, the smell of aviation fuel and the weather in Vietnam stimulated the senses of those who attended the various ceremonies, especially the returning veterans.<sup>57</sup>

The experiences of those who took part in the repatriation ceremonies reflected long-accumulated deep-rooted emotions. At the hand-back ceremony for Parker and

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<sup>55</sup> Only two members of the ill-fated patrol during which Fisher lost his life, Mick Van Droffelaar and John Cuzens were invited to Hanoi. The other two patrol members, Paul Saxton and Les Liddington, were not invited. Les Liddington opined that the reason he and Saxton were not invited was that they were 'not a part of the clique', but went on to graciously acknowledge that 'a number of the blokes who went were his actual mates: I was only a patrol member ... and that's fair enough'. Liddington, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally David Fisher)'.

<sup>56</sup> Robert Gillson Snr did not want to go back to Vietnam 'even to bring Peter's remains back. I just never could go back to that country—not even as a tourist'. Nevertheless, Gillson 'was glad that it [the repatriation] happened'. Gillson Snr, 'Having a brother (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

<sup>57</sup> As an example of being moved by sensory perceptions in Vietnam, Greg Weekes, a comrade and friend of Carver noted 'the sounds of those Rolls-Royce Avon engines going by ... just turns that clock right back'. Weekes, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Robert Carver)'.

Gillson in Hanoi on 4 June 2007, Minister Billson captured the essence of these emotions:

For the families of the loved ones lost, a day of great emotion, from elation to the emptiness of grief, a day of tears, both of joy and harrowing sorrow.<sup>58</sup>

### **'I did it as a soldier's wife'**

To many family members, the journey to Hanoi was very demanding. They were on foreign soil—in a strange place. Lorraine Easton described how she approached the trip to Hanoi in June 2007:

The only way I could go to Vietnam—and I was going, even if I walked [on] water—I had to take myself ... out of who I was, because that was a weaker person ... and I put myself in Peter's shoes. ... I did it as a soldier's wife, it was the hardest journey that I've ever had ... to lay Peter to rest and I needed to do it for Peter. It's just like the ending of a story; that the book was open for so long.<sup>59</sup>

### **'A slap in the face' and 'the proudest moment of my life'**

Robert Gillson Jr described his experiences at the hand-back ceremony in Hanoi:

I was mostly excited; mostly in control of my emotions, right up until the point where I saw the casket ... where I realised, where it hit me like a tidal wave—like a slap in the face—that I was with my Dad and [I'm] bringing him home.<sup>60</sup>

Nevertheless, Gillson's experiences at Richmond were rewarding, 'It was the proudest moment of my life to march Dad through ... all those people'.<sup>61</sup>

### **'What's going to happen here?'**

Not knowing what to expect was an issue for some. Fiona Pike recalled:

When the plane took off, Mum and I were saying, 'My God, what the hell are we going to find? What's going to happen here?' ... It was totally overwhelming and nothing I would want to experience ever again because it was really quite harsh.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> B. Billson, 'Speech delivered in Hanoi on 4 June 2007 on the repatriation of Lance Corporal Parker and Private Gillson', Canberra, ACT, Department of Defence.

<sup>59</sup> Easton, 'Having a husband (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

<sup>60</sup> Gillson Jr, 'Having a father (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Pike, 'Having a father (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

On returning to Australia, Carmel Hendrie acknowledged the family members were 'relieved' and 'exhausted'.<sup>63</sup>

### **'A beautiful trip'**

In contrast, Shane Herbert's impressions of the trip to Hanoi were different:

The trip to Hanoi was another incredible, very important part for me. ... It was the first time I'd been to Vietnam; it was the first time any member of the family [sic] had been to Vietnam; certainly not the first time any member of the family had not thought about Vietnam. ... [My] trip there was just a beautiful trip. I loved it.<sup>64</sup>

Some of the comrades found the trip to Hanoi challenging. John Bird felt 'apprehensive, very apprehensive'. Bird reported, 'I had to go and see my psychiatrist before I left—he thought it was a great idea for me to go'.<sup>65</sup>

Albert Thirkell, a comrade of Gillson, described the touchdown at Richmond of the C130 carrying Parker and Gillson: '[It was] one of the most unbelievable moments of my life. ... People were in awe'.<sup>66</sup> Clive Williams observed:

The whole ceremony was very moving. When the Hueys came over with their rotors making that boom, boom, boom, boom, boom sound, you could see tears in the eyes of the Vietnam veterans. It was a very moving occasion. I think enjoying it is not the right word but I certainly appreciated being there and am glad I was part of it.<sup>67</sup>

The men's return encouraged the unloading of much emotional baggage. Thirkell recollected:

After ... the ceremony [at Richmond] we had a few beers ... and later that night Sam [Domaschenz] turned round and said to my wife 'I'm happy now. It's all I've stayed alive

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<sup>63</sup> S. McRae, 'Digger home at last', *Herald Sun* (Melbourne), 20 Dec. 2007, sec. General News, p. 38.

<sup>64</sup> Herbert, 'Having a brother (Michael Herbert) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'.

<sup>65</sup> Bird, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Michael Herbert and Robert Carver)'.

<sup>66</sup> Thirkell, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Peter Gillson)'. After the reception ceremony, Thirkell met Gillson's widow and her son, Robert, 'we were all crying in to our beers but very, very happy'. Thirkell, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Peter Gillson)'.

<sup>67</sup> Williams, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Peter Gillson)'.

for to see Gilly come home. Now I'm right. I can die'. ... [It was] just the way Sam said it.<sup>68</sup>

Domaschenz was travelling beside Gillson when he was killed on 8 November 1965. Domaschenz died in August 2007, just over two months after Gillson's repatriation.

Similarly, Bill Host, a friend of Gillespie who felt partly responsible for Gillespie being killed described his experiences at Point Cook:

I was, I was just, I was just blubbing. ... I don't know whether it was sadness or just a combination of all those years, that decision we made that afternoon. ... And all those years of thinking about that, I think it all just come to the surface ... when that C130 was coming, when ... [it came] out of those clouds, oh man!<sup>69</sup>

Within Australian society by the early 1980s and since the First World War, a more open expression of grief replaced the stoicism that generally accompanied bereavement.<sup>70</sup> During the recovery, repatriation and commemoration of the Forgotten Six, many shed a tear or two and often demonstrated the now fashionable *man-hug*.

Veterans came from far-flung fields to attend the repatriation ceremonies despite the more-than-occasional tenuous connections to the Forgotten Six. Clive Williams observed:

I saw people in tears on return to Richmond when we came back with the bodies [of Parker and Gillson]. There were veterans there who had no personal knowledge of Peter [Gillson] and probably weren't even members of 1 RAR, who were obviously deeply moved by the whole occasion.<sup>71</sup>

Generally, the experiences of the comrades of the Forgotten Six during the repatriations were positive, accompanied by relief but tinged with sadness. For many, seeing the coffins for the first time was a difficult experience and carried a variety of meanings. For example, Shane Herbert succinctly acknowledged, 'He's dead'.<sup>72</sup> To Herbert the coffin symbolised death. Carmel Hendrie described the trauma of seeing her former husband's coffin for the first time:

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<sup>68</sup> Thirkell, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Peter Gillson)'.

<sup>69</sup> Host, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally John Gillespie)'.

<sup>70</sup> Jalland, *Changing Ways of Death in Twentieth-Century Australia: War, Medicine and the Funeral Business*, pp. 351–2.

<sup>71</sup> Williams, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Peter Gillson)'.

<sup>72</sup> Herbert, 'Having a brother (Michael Herbert) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'.



Hanoi for me was the most traumatic because there was a coffin and part of him there: To see that coffin and to know there was not much left, but there was something. ... I was numb.<sup>73</sup>

Furthermore, Hendrie pointed out the coffin represented an opportunity to re-establish a connection with her former husband:

He was part of me again, like he was there. He was something we could touch again. ... Back then, we couldn't touch him ... we didn't have a part of him.<sup>74</sup>

The experiences of Fisher's siblings on their first sight of the coffin were intensely emotional. Ann Cowdroy said, 'I was overwhelmed. ... I could not believe I was seeing the coffin for the first time'. Fisher's half-sister, Penny, similarly felt 'the hardest thing was seeing the casket for the first time. ... I pretty much lost it when I saw it'.<sup>75</sup>

The first encounter with the coffins for family members who did not travel to Hanoi was either at Darwin, Richmond, Point Cook or later at the funeral.<sup>76</sup> They preferred to delay the encounter with the coffin until in surroundings that were 'more comfortable'. The traumatic experience of seeing the coffins for the first time reflected a degree of finality and provided a new focus for grief, especially for the families.

The landing of the coffins on Australian soil for the first time was a significant milestone. The men were *home*! Robert Gillson Jr made the point that his experience in Darwin was more emotional, 'because that was where [his] Dad was on Australian soil ... that was the most significant part of the journey'.<sup>77</sup> Gordon Peterson emphatically summed up the notion that having the bodies back on Australian soil was important:

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<sup>73</sup> Hendrie, 'Having a husband (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> A. Curran, 'All our soldiers now home from Vietnam', *Army: The Soldiers' Newspaper*, Edn 1201, 30 Oct. 2008, p. 28.

<sup>76</sup> Parker's widow, Wendy Mudford and his sister, Pat Woodland first saw Parker's coffin in Darwin. Gillespie's sister, Christine did not see her brother's coffin until it was unloaded at Point Cook. Kerry Herbert, the sister of Michael Herbert was not at Richmond when her brother's coffin returned and did not see the coffin until it arrived in Adelaide.

<sup>77</sup> Gillson Jr, 'Having a father (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

When we'd landed in Darwin ... I knew that once we got the bodies back that far it wouldn't have mattered what they did after that. We had the bodies back home in Australia.<sup>78</sup>

Thus, the focus for the grief shifted from Hanoi to mainland Australia.

The Defence Community Organisation and the respective Service HQ arranged the funerals in accordance with the families' wishes. Table 6–4 provides details of the men's funerals and their official sites of commemoration.<sup>79</sup>

**Table 6–4: Funerals of the Forgotten Six**

DECEDENT	DATE	LOCATION OF SERVICE	DISPOSAL	OFFICIAL COMMEMORATION
Parker	12 June 2007	Grave-side service at Woden, ACT	Burial	Woden Cemetery, Woden, ACT; Section X Allotment 273A
Gillson	15 June 2007	St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne, Vic.	Burial	Fawkner Cemetery, Fawkner, Vic.; RC A 155D
Gillespie	22 Dec. 2007	St Anthony's Church, Glen Huntly, Vic.	Burial	Springvale Botanical Cemetery, Springvale, Vic.; Matthews Lawn; Row AE–Grave 66
Fisher	14 Oct. 2008, North Ryde, NSW	Magnolia Chapel, Macquarie Park Cemetery and Crematorium, North Ryde, NSW	Cremation	NSW Garden of Remembrance, Rookwood, NSW; Wall 4–Row L
Carver	3 Sept. 2009	St Luke's Anglican Church, Toowoomba, Qld	Cremation	Queensland Garden of Remembrance, located within Pinnaroo Lawn Cemetery, Bridgeman Downs, Qld; Wall 42–Row C
Herbert	7 Sept. 2009	Saint Francis Xavier's Cathedral, Adelaide, SA	Burial	Centennial Park Cemetery, Pasadena, SA; Derrick Gardens; Row 62–No 1636B

<sup>78</sup> Peterson, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Richard Parker)'.

<sup>79</sup> Department of Veterans' Affairs, 'Nominal Roll of Vietnam Veterans'.

The services ranged from a simple graveside service for Parker to the pontifical celebrated mass for Herbert.

The funerals of the Forgotten Six differed from those conducted for persons who had recently died and the emotional baggage accumulated over 36 years or more made it difficult for mourners to cope with the ceremonies. Parker's widow, at her former husband's funeral described this emotional cost:

You can't help reliving this time 41-and-a-half years ago. ... It's a very private and emotional time for me and to share my feelings and thoughts with those close to Tiny and myself.<sup>80</sup>

The funerals were too late for some. Bill Carver was in poor health but attended his brother's funeral; however, as Susanna Carver noted, 'it was just too late all the way around, but ... at least Bill was there ... in body, if not in spirit'.<sup>81</sup> Bill Carver died within four months of his brother's funeral, on 23 December 2009. Greg Weekes, a comrade of Carver, reflected on the tenacity of Michael Herbert's father: 'it was absolutely wonderful that he'd lasted so long to see his son come home and put him to rest'.<sup>82</sup> John Herbert died on 25 September 2009, less than three weeks after his son's funeral.

Strong emotions surged among the comrades. Les Liddington, a member of Fisher's patrol recalled 'everything was going well [at the funeral] until the older sister started to speak ... then I had trouble keeping my composure'.<sup>83</sup> Greg Weekes, the friend of Robert Carver, gave the eulogy at Carver's funeral.<sup>84</sup> Weekes 'was quite surprised ... [that he] actually got to get the delivery out without breaking down'.<sup>85</sup>

Some mourners felt a sense of relief and connection. At Parker's funeral, Colin Butterworth, a comrade of Parker and Gillson felt 'relieved that he [Parker] was home,

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<sup>80</sup> Anon., 'A final salute for our lost Vietnam diggers', *Penrith Press*, 8 June 2007, pp. 1–2.

<sup>81</sup> Carver, 'Having a brother-in-law (Robert Carver) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'.

<sup>82</sup> Weekes, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Robert Carver)'.

<sup>83</sup> Liddington, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally David Fisher)'.

<sup>84</sup> G. Weekes, 'Eulogy delivered on 3 September on the occasion of Robert Carver's funeral at Toowoomba, Qld', Tallai, Qld, 2009.

<sup>85</sup> Weekes, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Robert Carver)'.

relieved that there'd been some finalisation, especially for his wife'.<sup>86</sup> Shane Herbert felt a sense of connection among the mourners at his brother's funeral.

The funeral really did bring together all people who had a connection with Michael: the Vietnam veterans' community; ... the people of Sacred Heart who do have a connection with students past and present; there was obviously my family ... my father, my sister and my mother who's passed away.<sup>87</sup>

Dealing with the experiences around the repatriations and the funerals generally became easier as the funerals approached. Robert Gillson Jr recalled 'the roller-coaster ride moving from being upset in Darwin to being overjoyed at Richmond'.<sup>88</sup> Bill Host, a comrade and friend of Gillespie, recalled the funeral did not have the same 'sledgehammer' impact as the repatriation ceremony at Point Cook, and instead he 'felt sort of sedate and relaxed'.<sup>89</sup> Similarly for Roy Zegers, a crewmember on the Gillespie helicopter, the funeral 'was a special occasion but ... the finale ... [was] ... the ramp ceremony' at Point Cook.<sup>90</sup> The ceremony at Point Cook was the first time Host and Zegers saw Gillespie's coffin.

Some comrades, for various reasons, carried feelings of guilt about the loss of some members of the Forgotten Six. John Bird explained his feelings before Herbert and Carver's recovery, 'I had this terrible guilt complex—that they were there [in Vietnam] and I wasn't'. Bird further reflected, the funeral 'meant the end of a time of pain. It was closure. The last part of my history in Vietnam was finished'. The recovery and the funeral helped to redress Bird's feelings of guilt. This was a common reaction for a number of the comrades.

The *coming home* of the Forgotten Six dominated the thinking of many. Typically, Trevor Hagan on hearing OAH recovered Parker's remains, articulated the importance of bringing the men home, 'they'll be buried in Australian soil ... [where] you

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<sup>86</sup> Butterworth, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Richard Parker and Peter Gillson)'.

<sup>87</sup> Herbert, 'Having a brother (Michael Herbert) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'.

<sup>88</sup> Gillson Jr, 'Having a father (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

<sup>89</sup> Host, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally John Gillespie)'.

<sup>90</sup> Zegers, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally John Gillespie)'.

can put your hand on their bloody gravestone'.<sup>91</sup> The families were similarly affected. In mid-June 2007, Parker's widow ... said, 'I am truly happy knowing both Tiny [Parker] and Peter [Gillson] have been found and returned home to their own country where they belong'.<sup>92</sup>

In some instances, rather than simply being home on 'Australian soil' the concept of *home* had a degree of specificity within the notions of state, neighbourhood and family locale. Carmel Hendrie indicated she felt 'probably more emotional' at the Point Cook ceremony because her former husband 'was coming home to his [home] state'.<sup>93</sup> Fiona Pike and Robert Gillson Jr also referred to this sense of specificity.<sup>94</sup>

Nonetheless, questions remained about the quantity of remains recovered, the contents of the various coffins and the validity of the identifications. In reality, over the 36 years or more while the men lay in Vietnam, most of their remains were dispersed as dust or ashes or dissolved in the typically acid soil. Therefore, only relatively minor portions of the men's remains returned home. The paucity of remains recovered was troublesome to some. For example, Jeffery Wullaert who assisted with the initial excavation of Parker and Gillson's grave—unearthing the bones—reflected on this issue at Richmond as the coffins were unloaded:

It was nice to know we had them back home ... [but] at the same time I had visions ... in my head, what were in those coffins? ... It's ... a little disturbing.<sup>95</sup>

Despite the incompleteness of the recovered remains, some mourners visualised the contents of the coffins differently. On seeing his brother's coffin for the first time in Darwin, Robert Gillson Snr felt the body in the coffin was complete:

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<sup>91</sup> Hagan, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Richard Parker)'.

<sup>92</sup> D. Griffin, 'Finally home', *Army: The Soldiers' Newspaper*, Edn 1168, 14 June 2007, p. 3.

<sup>93</sup> Hendrie, 'Having a husband (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'. Perhaps the closeness of the widow's bond to the decedent and her memories of the locale and happier times encouraged this heightened state of emotionality.

<sup>94</sup> Pike highlighted this sense of specificity when she described taking her father home: 'Then we took him home to Glen Huntley ... where he grew up. ... We buried him at Springvale Cemetery, where his parents also rest'. Cullen, 'Peace at last', p. 13. Similarly, Robert Gillson Jr referenced this sense of specificity, 'it meant that I was burying my own father in my own country, in a place next to his parents'. Gillson Jr, 'Having a father (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

<sup>95</sup> J. Wullaert, 'Involvement with Operation Aussies Home and the recovery of Australian MIAs from Vietnam (principally Parker and Gillson)', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], 19 Mar. 2010, Fraser, ACT.

I'm not religious but I saw him lying there, in ... [civilian] clothes. It just flashed into me head the picture of him, in the pants and the green jumper that he had and I just went to pieces.<sup>96</sup>

Similarly, Gordon Peterson on seeing the coffins in Hanoi opined:

OK those blokes are in there, ... knowing that ... they wouldn't have looked the same as back in those days but that's all I could see, was them laying there as they were [before their death].<sup>97</sup>

This sense of *wholeness* was in some cases extended to incorporate the idea the men's spirits, as well as their earthly remains returned home. Roy Zegers held the idea that Gillespie returned *complete*, 'I had a feeling as if the whole of him was there, not just pieces, that he'd returned entirely ... soul, mind, body, spirit, everything. He was back home'.<sup>98</sup>

Although the concept of wholeness permeated the survivors' narratives, at least one individual questioned having a funeral for one who was missing-in-action for so long. *George*, a comrade of Herbert, observed:<sup>99</sup>

I'd find any one of those funerals a little bit weird because they generally have it with a coffin—but there's only a couple of bones in there and it just doesn't seem right to me ... to act as if they've just died and the body is still intact in a coffin.<sup>100</sup>

Nevertheless, most talk about the decedents as if they were present in body and spirit and that the bodies were *complete*.

After the recovery of remains of an MIA person, physical evidence to confirm death becomes available, but even in the presence of physical evidence there is the possibility of doubt emerging.<sup>101</sup> However, most members of the families of the

<sup>96</sup> Gillson Snr, 'Having a brother (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

<sup>97</sup> Peterson, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Richard Parker)'.

<sup>98</sup> Zegers, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally John Gillespie)'.

<sup>99</sup> *George* reported his religiosity as Roman Catholic, Non-practicing.

<sup>100</sup> *George*, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam'.

<sup>101</sup> Following the recovery of a missing person's remains, survivors require evidence of death. First, viewing the body is a possibility, but is often not available in MIA cases. Second, seeing the coffin *allegedly* containing the missing person's remains provides some assurance that the person died. Third, seeing the coffin lowered into the ground or watching it being fed into the furnace reinforces the notion that death occurred. Fourth, without having attended the funeral, seeing the grave later suggests the missing person is dead. As a last resort, receiving a photograph of the grave suggests death took place. Processes for the identification of the dead

Forgotten Six and their comrades were happy to accept the coffins contained at least some of the men's remains because professionally qualified persons, working to established standards carried out the identifications. Furthermore, the families wanted the quickest and best outcome. Nevertheless, two families sought confirmation of the process. On 29 January 2008, Carmel Hendrie requested details of both the investigation and subsequent excavation related to her former husband. Minister Snowdon forwarded copies of the relevant reports, which satisfied Hendrie.<sup>102</sup> Shane Herbert needed an assurance the coffin contained the remains of his brother, 'To say that we've found bits and pieces was not enough for me. I personally needed to see the coroner's report.'<sup>103</sup> Herbert read the coroner's report and was satisfied.<sup>104</sup>

The men's recovery and their funerals enabled the creation of official sites of commemoration: Fisher and Carver's commemorative plaques and the graves of the other four men. These sites provided an enduring focus for grief. Other types of memorials are not as powerful because they lack something that only the official sites of commemoration provide, especially the grave. Fiona Pike made this point clearly:

Canberra is special because it's the Vietnam War Memorial and it's such an iconic place. But to me, Dad's not really there. Dad's here in Melbourne. That's where we laid him to rest.<sup>105</sup>

The grave provided a sense of place to Robert Gillson Snr, 'there's somewhere that I can go, that I can see ... there's something there'.<sup>106</sup> Hence, the official sites of commemoration provide a sense of permanency and security and for some, a tangible

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are subject to rigorous standards. However, except for viewing the body, all the above-mentioned options to confirm death potentially introduce the question of the level of confidence in the identification process, at least in the *minds* of some family members and comrades.

<sup>102</sup> W. Snowdon, 'Efforts of Army History Unit in recovering John Gillespie', [letter to C. Hendrie], 28 May 2008, Canberra, ACT.

<sup>103</sup> Herbert, 'Having a brother (Michael Herbert) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'.

<sup>104</sup> Shane Herbert stated, 'When I viewed the coroner's report saying that ... [remains] had been found indicating a man, a male, 6 foot 3, on a particular site where other components were found, then that for me completed the picture'. Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Pike, 'Having a father (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>106</sup> Gillson Snr, 'Having a brother (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'. In Apr. 2008, Fiona Pike, Gillespie's daughter elaborated on the grave's significance as point of connection: 'After 36 years, I finally have a grave, where I can go and talk to Dad'. Cullen, 'Peace at last', p. 13.

link to the decedent. However, most have not ritualised cemetery visits.<sup>107</sup> Although Christine Gillespie lived in Melbourne and her brother was buried in the Melbourne suburb of Springvale, she reported:

[I] haven't been back to the ... cemetery or anything, 'cos as I said our family aren't big on visiting cemeteries, but ... his memory is strong and maybe there is a certain calmness to my memories of him now that he's buried in Australia'.<sup>108</sup>

Fiona Pike similarly suggested 'He [her father] feels home: I don't need to go to the cemetery to feel like he's home'.<sup>109</sup> Thus, visits to the men's graves, or the commemorative plaques of Fisher and Carver are *optional*; nevertheless, the option is always there.

The performance of Government and the ADF during the repatriation and funerary stages was unblemished and the authorities interacted warmly and sympathetically with the men's families and comrades.<sup>110</sup> Although initial communications between the Gillespie family and the Government and ADF were sometimes difficult, after the discovery of remains communication was much improved, to the extent Gillespie's widow felt 'Bruce [Billson] handled it very well, I will say he was brilliant'.<sup>111</sup> Fisher's half-sister, Penny, when reflecting on the repatriation ceremony in Hanoi indicated 'everybody was so supportive ... they were all there because they really cared'.<sup>112</sup> Similarly, the comrades were very impressed by and glowingly assessed how the authorities arranged the repatriations and funerals.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Most family members and the men's comrades do not live close to the graves or the memorial plaques of Fisher and Carver and therefore visits are inconvenient. Another factor for the lack of regular visitation might be because the deaths occurred long-ago and the grieving experience is not as fresh as with recent deaths.

<sup>108</sup> Gillespie, 'Having a brother (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>109</sup> Pike, 'Having a father (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>110</sup> For example, regarding the efficacy of the repatriation of his father, Robert Gillson observed, 'I thought things were put together extremely well ... extremely professionally, in the way I've come to expect Defence to work'. Gillson Jr, 'Having a father (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'. At the time of the repatriation of Peter Gillson, Robert Jr was a lieutenant in the Army Reserve and subsequently completed a tour of duty in Afghanistan.

<sup>111</sup> Hendrie, 'Having a husband (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>112</sup> Curran, 'All our soldiers now home from Vietnam', p. 28.

<sup>113</sup> Clive Williams, Gillson's Platoon Commander from 1965 observed, 'It was done very well and the people involved should be proud of it'. Williams, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Peter Gillson)'. Paul Saxton, a comrade of Fisher opined, 'I don't think



Understandably, there was the occasional negative observation. At Herbert's funeral, Nick Leray-Myer, Herbert's flying instructor (1967–69) noted 'Senator Faulkner was standing outside [Saint Francis Xavier's Cathedral] ... and some of the comments [that] were directed at him were vitriolic and extreme'.<sup>114</sup> Another anonymous individual felt after the repatriation of Parker and Gillson the ADF did not acknowledge OAH sufficiently, 'it was Operation Aussies Home Inc ... that did it and we didn't get a mention: That cheesed me off'. (Generally, OAH personnel did not share this feeling.)

The funerals did not end the men's public commemoration. There was the production of six additional plaques denoting the Forgotten Six were 'Home at Last', to be attached to the three benches that form part of the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial in Canberra. These additional plaques were affixed to the sides of benches and unveiled following the Vietnam Veterans' Day services in August 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010.<sup>115</sup> The original six plaques carrying the names and loss details of the Forgotten Six remained in place, on the ends of the benches.

Kerryn Herbert, Michael Herbert's sister did not participate in the Herbert–Carver repatriation ceremonies in Hanoi or Richmond but attended her brother's funeral and the re-badging of the Herbert–Carver seat on 18 August 2010. At the re-badging ceremony, 'Ms Herbert ... said it was a "deeply emotional" day for the family. "It's a very powerful time but I'm very happy to have been around so many like-minded people that chose to be here. I'm feeling very much a part of the collective"'.<sup>116</sup> Commencing at about 4.30 pm, a dusk service was held to remember Michael Herbert. Ms Herbert arranged this ceremony without the support of the Department of Veterans' Affairs.<sup>117</sup> Shane Herbert later recalled:

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it could have gone off much better'. Saxton, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally David Fisher)'.

<sup>114</sup> N. Leray-Myer, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Michael Herbert)', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], 4 June 2010, Pascoe Vale South, Vic. Leray-Myer served in Vietnam with 9 Squadron from 16 June to 17 Dec. 1971.

<sup>115</sup> Since 1988, 18 Aug. is remembered as Vietnam Veterans' Day. After 1992, with the construction of the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial in Canberra, a commemorative ceremony has been traditionally held at the Memorial on Vietnam Veterans' Day. Being convenient to Parliament House, politicians were in ample supply for these ceremonies and the Governor General attended in 2007, 2009 and 2010.

<sup>116</sup> R. Young, 'A final farewell as Vietnam's casualties remembered', *Canberra Times*, 19 Aug. 2010, p. 2.

<sup>117</sup> Drizzling rain, a light breeze and a temperature of only eight degrees Celsius boded for an uncomfortable evening. Shane Herbert was present, along with some members from 2 Squadron, RAAF HQ and OAH. The ceremony was not only about Michael Herbert but encompassed the lives of the mother and father by recalling their keynote melodies—but the

(Continued)

My sister ... took the once-off opportunity of getting very involved in the Canberra ceremony. .... She did a marvellous job of making it very personal for her and for the Herbert family.<sup>118</sup>

Bill Denny, a long time friend of the Herbert family noted the evening ceremony in Canberra in August 2010 'was good for the Vietnam veterans but it was most particularly good for Kerry'.<sup>119</sup>

### ***OUTCOMES OF 'REPOSITIONING THE DEAD'***

A series of outcomes followed the recovery of the Forgotten Six. First and most importantly, the investigation of the cases of the Forgotten Six and their belated recovery helped redress the ambiguity endured by members of the men's families and their comrades for 36 years or more. The men's recovery and commemoration provided these family members and comrades with the opportunity to achieve enhanced levels of closure. Second, the men's recovery stimulated a healing process for some veterans, offering an opportunity to ameliorate the distress occasioned by the Vietnam War. Third, members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades, as well as others in the veteran community updated their narratives to tell their particular stories around the Forgotten Six. Fourth, a degree of conflict emerged within two of the families, centred around the roles of certain individuals within the familial hierarchy of grief.

The investigations, aided considerably by the Vietnamese Government and a number of Vietnamese citizens provided definitive information regarding the loss incidents. The members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades gained a fuller understanding of the men's fate thereby redressing, at least partly, the ambiguity surrounding the men's loss. For example, even though the reasons for Herbert and Carver's aircraft crashing were not established, information from the Vietnamese confirmed the aircraft plummeted to the ground, out of control. Excavation of the site confirmed the men did not eject from the aircraft and died in their seats on impact.

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batteries in Ms Herbert's CD player died. As darkness fell, the automatic lights around the Memorial thankfully kicked in. Ms Herbert coped and her brother let it all flow over him.

<sup>118</sup> Herbert, 'Having a brother (Michael Herbert) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'.

<sup>119</sup> Denny, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Michael Herbert)'.

In some instances, comrades who had been directly involved in a loss incident now possess facts to measure themselves against. For example, Trevor Hagan, Parker's nominal Section Commander from 1965 felt vindicated because the opposing force commander, Nguyen Van Bao explained how he defeated A Company 1 RAR on 8 November 1965, by the skilful use of his men and weapons on the particular piece of ground. Hagan was able to see the ground and the benefit it afforded to Bao. Furthermore, Hagan was convinced that Bao had superior firepower on the day and during the excavation of the site in April 2007, the searchers recovered a spent .30 calibre machine gun cartridge case from the weapon pit in which Bao's men buried Parker and Gillson. Clive Williams, Gillson's Platoon Commander from 1965 also listened to Bao's account and saw the ground where the encounter took place. Both Hagan and Williams could see there was little more they could have done to recover Parker and Gillson during the battle in 1965.

Hence, such knowledge reduced the ambiguity that plagued many members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades for so long, and contributed immeasurably toward closure. Furthermore, for some comrades, specifically those who experienced feelings of guilt because of abandoning the men in Vietnam, the recovery of the remains of the Forgotten Six was the ultimate act of reparation, which finalised an uncompleted task. During the men's recovery and commemoration, some used the term 'closure' but the meanings ascribed to the term varied considerably.

***'Closure [was] the main thing ... definite proof that it was ended'***

Some associated closure with finality. For example, when asked about the impact of his brother's recovery, Robert Gillson Snr replied, 'closure [was] the main thing ... definite proof that it was ended, it was over and we had something tangible to go by'. Others, such as Bruce Billson saw this finality from a different perspective:

I'm not a big fan of this closure term: People have got closure? I don't buy that. I saw something quite [the] opposite. I saw an unresolved chapter in people's lives now having content.<sup>120</sup>

Billson suggested the experiences did not revolve around finality per se, but stressed the element of completion. Jack Thurgar similarly stated:

Nearly all of them have talked about not closing the book and ... never does it give them final closure. What they see is ... closure of a chapter within the book of life.

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<sup>120</sup> Billson, 'The recovery of Australian MIAs from Vietnam'.

Others pointed out this completion came at a cost. For example, Peter Aylett, a member of OAH, observed the men's recovery opened 'up the wounds again'. Aylett commented to Shane Herbert, 'hopefully, Shane, this will give you a platform to work from'.<sup>121</sup> In his advice, Aylett hints at a lack of finality.

Some admitted they initially believed there was no such thing as closure, until they experienced the repatriations of the Forgotten Six. For example, Barry Carpenter an associate of Michael Herbert opined:

The term closure seems to have been a modern thing, but with Mike [Herbert], I think it's come home [to Carpenter] that it really isn't. It's the real thing, and it's probably something I've had inside me for a long time.<sup>122</sup>

Some acknowledged the affective nature of closure.<sup>123</sup> Clive Williams, Gillson's Platoon Commander from 1965 observed 'I think the term closure is a bit overdone, but it seemed to me to help some people in terms of putting their emotional lives in order'.<sup>124</sup>

In the context of this discussion, closure is a state of mind reflecting the extent to which family members, friends and comrades felt they had redressed their contentious issues. Closure did not relate only to the men's death and the attendant grief, but could also relate to an individual's involvement in the loss event. Closure is multi-faceted, highly subjective, person specific and temporally situated within a cultural and social environment.

From 2007 to 2009, while OAH and the ADF recovered the remains of the Forgotten Six, the emotional energy that the families invested in having their cases investigated paid handsome dividends, and resulted in enhanced levels of closure. These fresh levels of closure revolved around four processes. First, family members and comrades initially re-defined their aspirations, which were progressively satisfied. Second, members of the men's families and their comrades, devoid of hope categorically accepted death. Third, recovering the remains of the Forgotten Six

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<sup>121</sup> Aylett, 'Involvement with Operation Aussies Home and the recovery of Australian MIAs from Vietnam'.

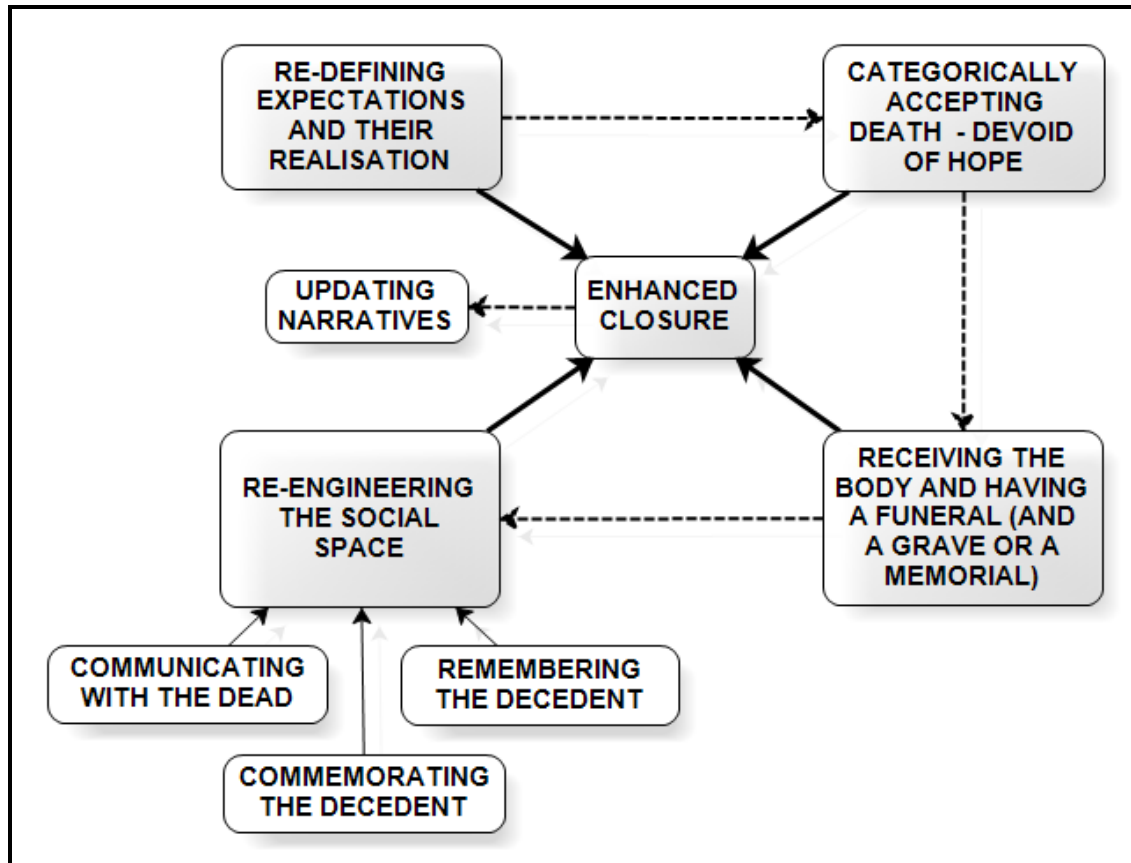
<sup>122</sup> Carpenter, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Michael Herbert)'.

<sup>123</sup> Leahy, 'ADF involvement in the recovery of Australian MIAs from Vietnam and other general MIA matters'; and, Williams, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Peter Gillson)'.

<sup>124</sup> Williams, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Peter Gillson)'.

enabled the conduct of funerals for the men. Fourth, family members and comrades, having access to reliable information re-engineered the social spaces they allocated to the men. Figure 6—1 shows the relationships between these processes.

**Figure 6–1: Elements of Closure on 'Repositioning the Dead'**



Commencing in 2002, members of the families of the Forgotten Six re-defined their expectations to reflect their desire to recover the men's remains. The outcomes of subsequent investigations and recovery operations (2007–09) satisfied these expectations. In particular, redressing the ambiguity around the men's loss and having reliable information encouraged closure.

The expectations of some family members and comrades did not necessarily include the recovery of remains, at least initially. Specifically, Christine Gillespie recalled 'closure was the Australian government saying there were no remains, so that hopefully somehow speculation and publicity and so on would go away'.<sup>125</sup>

<sup>125</sup> Gillespie, 'Having a brother (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'. These earlier aspirations resulted from noetic pursuits, in which family members, friends and comrades engaged, sometime after the loss incidents—*rationalisations*. The high levels of emotionality that emerged around the time of the loss  
(Continued)

Nevertheless, with Gillespie's family, when the opportunity emerged to avail themselves of the benefits that flowed from the recovery of identifiable remains they followed the more widely adopted pathway to closure.

The recovery of remains convinced some skeptical family members, friends and comrades that the Forgotten Six were dead. For example, in 2006 Pat Woodland 'perceived that recovery of Parker's remains would provide important closure for Wendy [Parker's widow], who for a number of years believed her husband would walk through the door'.<sup>126</sup> Fiona Gillespie, John Gillespie's youngest sister did not accept her brother was dead until the Excavation Team recovered his remains in late 2007.<sup>127</sup> The coffins containing the Forgotten Six constituted a symbol confirming the men were dead. Paul Saxton, a member of Fisher's patrol said, 'I suppose up until his funeral [and seeing the coffin] I thought that there might have been some chance that he was out there and alive ... however remote'.<sup>128</sup> Seeing Fisher's coffin extinguished Saxton's hopes. Hence, the recovery of remains and the conduct of the funerals encouraged the unequivocal acceptance of death and benefited closure.

***'The funeral was closure of Michael. ... That's what this funeral was'***

Speaking on behalf of his mother and himself, Robert Gillson Jr said, 'When he [Peter Gillson] finally gets home we will be able to pay our respects physically and gain closure'.<sup>129</sup> Similarly, Shane Herbert noted:

The funeral was closure of Michael. ... It was almost like I was taking care of a very old debt; it had to be paid, it had to be paid in full. ... That's what this funeral was.<sup>130</sup>

The comrades also acknowledged the funerals' contribution to closure. Gavin O'Brien, a comrade of Gillespie, reflected that the funeral in the church Gillespie attended in his youth provided 'an incredible sense of closure'.<sup>131</sup>

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incidents diminished over the years, as family members, friends and comrades contemplated their emotional conflict and associated issues, and generally adopted a more pragmatic attitude.

<sup>126</sup> Rehn, 'Fallen but not forgotten'.

<sup>127</sup> Hawkins, 'Behind Enemy Lines: Part 2', Christine Gillespie, 12 min. Fiona Gillespie died on 3 Feb. 2009.

<sup>128</sup> Saxton, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally David Fisher)'.

<sup>129</sup> I. McPhedran, 'Last trip for lost diggers', *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 1 May 2007, p. 6.

<sup>130</sup> Herbert, 'Having a brother (Michael Herbert) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'.

<sup>131</sup> O'Brien, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally John Gillespie)'. Similarly, Bob Stephens, a crewmember on the Gillespie helicopter reflected on the

Understandably, the funerals reinforced finality. In 2009, Ann Cowdroy hinted at this feeling of finality, accompanied by a sense of placid resolution, when the *Canberra Times* reported, 'Annie Cowdroy said she and her family found inner peace with the return of her brother's remains [and indicated] "This [is] a real milestone for us"'.<sup>132</sup> Similarly, Fiona Pike recounted how the funeral brought a degree of finality:

Especially being Catholic ... Dad would've wanted that and ... the fact that Brian, my uncle, [who officiated at Gillespie's funeral] was a part of that ... was definitely a final touch to someone with religious beliefs.<sup>133</sup>

Although the funerals acknowledged the reality of 'ashes to ashes, dust to dust' and brought a much-needed degree of finality to the grieving process, the funerals did not mean the living severed their connections with the dead. Carmel Hendrie reflected on the on-going connection she and her daughter felt:

Fiona and I had him in all our hearts all the time and we will always: Just because I'm remarried and whatever we'll never, ever change ... he was part of my life and an important part of my life.<sup>134</sup>

***'Closing a chapter of a book, not the book itself, but a chapter'***

After her brother's funeral, Christine Gillespie felt 'some chapter [of John's story] has closed'.<sup>135</sup> To Les Liddington, a comrade of Fisher the funeral 'was like closing a chapter of a book, not the book itself, but a chapter'.<sup>136</sup> Thus, having a funeral is not necessarily the end of the relationship with the deceased.

Mike Wran, Premier of South Australia, addressed the House of Assembly on 8 September 2009, the day after Herbert's funeral:

Ceremonies such as yesterday's [ceremony] are important for Australia's soul. They mark an everlasting companionship between the living and the dead—a handshake across the void. ... [We] try to touch with our minds the relatives who sometimes we did

funeral: 'I'm so pleased, because it helps us guys who lost a mate, and it brings closure to John's family'. Wilson, 'War death lingers across the years'.

<sup>132</sup> Young, 'Homecomings ease pain of Vietnam War'.

<sup>133</sup> Pike, 'Having a father (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'. 'Brian' was Father Brian O'Sullivan, John Gillespie's brother-in-law.

<sup>134</sup> Hendrie, 'Having a husband (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>135</sup> Gillespie, 'Having a brother (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>136</sup> Liddington, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally David Fisher)'.

not even know. ... We sing hymns and we lower the flag half-mast; we fire the guns in salute and hope that somewhere, somehow, they can hear us.<sup>137</sup>

Premier Wran appropriately and effectively described the activities that take place in the social spaces that the living construct to accommodate the dead and to enable the living and the dead to privately and publicly connect. After the men's recovery, family members and comrades progressively adjusted their social spaces (Figure 6–1, page 242). This re-engineering relied on a number of devices including remembering the decedent, commemorating the decedent and communicating with the dead. Through these devices, the survivors continued to refine the post-mortem identities of dead.

For some, the frequency of remembering decreased after the Forgotten Six were recovered. Gordon Peterson reported in 2010, he does not 'think about him [Parker] as much now that he is home and buried'.<sup>138</sup> Nonetheless, for others the intensity and frequency of remembering continues. Three years after Parker was recovered, Pat Woodland recalled, 'I still think about him a lot'.<sup>139</sup>

A thread of inclusiveness, of presence, emerges in the memories of some comrades. Barry Carpenter, a comrade of Herbert recalled, 'I knew him as a real person: He's still a real person and he's a very admirable sort of an individual'.<sup>140</sup> In Carpenter's case, the representation of what is Herbert resides in the present.

### ***'They shall grow not old'***

The idea that 'they shall grow not old' permeated the memories of family members and comrades. At Parker's funeral, 'Jillene Olson, a close friend of ... Parker's widow ... spoke of how they remembered ... [Parker] ... as the young man they met at Bondi'.<sup>141</sup> Hence, these social spaces contain memories of the men as they were before death.

### ***'I talk about him with pride'***

The tone of remembering following the recoveries was generally positive. Lorraine Easton remembers:

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<sup>137</sup> M. Rann, 'SA House of Assembly, 8 September: Condolence Motion: Flying Officer Michael Herbert', Adelaide, SA, House of Assembly, 2009, pp. 3661–3.

<sup>138</sup> Peterson, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Richard Parker)'.

<sup>139</sup> Woodland, 'Having a brother (Richard Parker) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

<sup>140</sup> Carpenter, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Michael Herbert)'.

<sup>141</sup> D. Griffin, 'Heroes at rest', *Army: The Soldiers' Newspaper*, Edn 1169, 28 June 2007, p. 2.



I talk about him with pride because I'm with the Vietnam Vets group here where I live. I still talk about him and I have his photo around my home.<sup>142</sup>

### ***'I don't wanna forget'***

Public and private commemorations symbolically preserve the memories of the Forgotten Six. For example, Robert Gillson Snr assembled a memorial album with photographs and recollections to preserve the memory of his brother, 'I don't wanna forget'.<sup>143</sup>

Commemorations often aid survivors in developing a more comfortable social space. After the recovery and the funeral of John Gillespie, Christine Gillespie thought the social space she previously allocated to her brother changed. She opined, 'there's a feeling of relief ... and there's a certain contentment and tranquillity about that—it doesn't feel all so violent and frightening anymore'.<sup>144</sup>

In Adelaide on 17 December 2011, the City of Holdfast Bay officially opened the Michael Herbert Bridge.<sup>145</sup> According to Shane Herbert, the naming of this bridge was a community-focused commemoration that was more than a dedication to his brother.

[The naming of the bridge] encompasses the spirit of the family and that takes it from a sad memory of Michael to a memory of courage within the family ... it's a feeling of great pride and recognition, that Michael's name is not now equated with great loss and sadness ... but is equated with something new and fresh.<sup>146</sup>

This act of commemoration transformed the social space allocated to Michael Herbert by his brother.

Visits to the graveside sometimes stimulate a desire to communicate with the dead. Fiona Pike reported, 'We've gone [to the grave] and had a chat'.<sup>147</sup> However, it was not only the grave—or being at the graveside on infrequent occasions—that

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<sup>142</sup> Easton, 'Having a husband (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

<sup>143</sup> Gillson Snr, 'Having a brother (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

<sup>144</sup> Gillespie, 'Having a brother (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>145</sup> The Michael Herbert Bridge replaced the old King Street Bridge, which crosses the lower reaches of the Sturt River. The western end of the bridge is just under one kilometer from the Herbert family home in Glenelg North, SA.

<sup>146</sup> Herbert, 'Renaming of the old King Street Bridge as the Michael Herbert Bridge in the City of Holdfast Bay'.

<sup>147</sup> Pike, 'Having a father (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

encourages communication with the dead.<sup>148</sup> Symbolism sometimes engenders such communication.

***'I hear his voice through the magpies'***

The magpies are important to Shane Herbert. The 2 Squadron RAAF crest carried the image of a magpie with outstretched wings, ever since the Squadron was formed in 1917.<sup>149</sup> Herbert recalled:

Partway through [the dusk service on 18 August 2010 in Canberra] I looked up and saw two magpies sitting and watching us in this ceremony. They came out of nowhere. They stayed for about 45 minutes and flew off.<sup>150</sup>

Herbert had not previously made the connection between the magpies and his brother but now, in times of uncertainty he connects with and draws strength from his brother through the magpies.

When things are uncertain, there is a magpie that lands in the back yard, I hear his voice through the magpies. He is there consistently. ... I hear him and that's how I feel him. He is a magpie and he's around, and he owes me. My brother owes me big-time, but he's looking after me as well'.<sup>151</sup>

Lorraine Easton provided another example of how the living might draw strength and seek guidance from the dead. In 2002, Lorraine wrote a letter to her former husband to go into a time capsule, and Easton described how she draws strength from him: 'Your spirit I know has always been around me. I often feel a guidance from you and a strength beyond what I thought I could manage'.<sup>152</sup>

Stress and/or high levels of emotionality often encased experiences of communicating with the dead.<sup>153</sup> For instance, Jeffery Wullaert, the GPR operator who

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<sup>148</sup> Ziino makes the point that 'photographs and personal items' have a role, along with the grave in facilitating communicating with the dead. Ziino, *A Distant Grief: Australians, War Graves and the Great War*, p. 24.

<sup>149</sup> The call sign of 2 Squadron's Canberra Bombers in Vietnam incorporated the word 'magpie' and the call sign of the aircraft flown by Herbert and Carver on 3 Nov. 1970 was 'Magpie 91'.

<sup>150</sup> Herbert, 'Having a brother (Michael Herbert) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'.

<sup>151</sup> Herbert, 'Having a brother (Michael Herbert) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'.

<sup>152</sup> L. Gillson, 'Happenings within the family', [letter to Peter Gillson for inclusion in a time capsule], 30 Nov. 2002, Picton, NSW.

<sup>153</sup> Another illustration of a stressful situation encouraging the desire to communicate with the dead emerged during the searching on the Parker and Gillson site in 2007, 'one fellow ... would walk around the hill saying, "put your hand up put your hand up, where are you buried, where

worked in the hole excavating Parker and Gillson in April 2007, recalled 'we would be whispering to these guys ... you poor buggers we're getting you out of here! ... We're going to take you home'.<sup>154</sup> Wullaert was working under extreme conditions in an emotionally charged environment, but he had never met Parker or Gillson. Perhaps communicating with the dead is a strategy people use to deal with stress.

Hence, visiting significant sites or encountering significant symbols and/or enduring periods of uncertainty or stress may trigger the desire to communicate with the dead, and such communications enable the living to strengthen their bonds with the dead. The maintenance of such bonds is an important feature of closure and indications are it is a normal and healthy endeavour. However, neither the grave nor any other physical reference anchors the social space and the living, within these mental constructs are able to connect with the dead at will. Maintenance of a comfortable social space is therefore an extremely useful component of closure.

In short, with the men's recovery and commemoration members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades potentially achieved enhanced levels of closure, predicated upon the attainment of their aspirations around the recovery of the men's remains, unequivocal acceptance of death and the rite of passage afforded by the funeral. Furthermore, family members and comrades re-engineered their social spaces, which now hold generally the Forgotten Six as *complete* in body and in spirit, not simply as a collection of fragmented remains. The social spaces are much more comfortable and provide a venue for on-going connections with the Forgotten Six—not the loss incident sites, memorials or the places of official commemoration, including the graves. However, for many, even with the men's homecoming the book of grief remains open.

In the context of this study, healing is the positive state of well-being induced by resolving a long-standing contentious issue accompanied by a state of psychological dissonance. Healing may accompany closure, but healing is a broader concept.

During the repatriation and funerals of the six men, healing was palpable, as was demonstrated by the emotional outpourings of family members and comrades, and the veteran community more generally. However, other sections of the community

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are you buried". Bourke, 'Operation Aussies Home and the recovery of the Australian MIAs from Vietnam'.

<sup>154</sup> Wullaert, 'Involvement with Operation Aussies Home and the recovery of Australian MIAs from Vietnam (principally Parker and Gillson)'.

stepped forward to express their sentiments. Politicians offered their condolences and acknowledged the importance of the men's recovery.<sup>155</sup> Hence, not only did members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades have an opportunity to improve their state of well-being, members of the wider community also benefited.

There are a number of reasons for recovering war dead.<sup>156</sup> Three of these appear relevant in the context of this discussion, first, satisfying political reasons associated with the body's symbolism; second, recovering the bodies to meet the perceived moral obligation to the dead themselves and to their families; and, third, providing the body (or remains) to assist in the grieving process.

Some Australian Vietnam veterans had difficulty getting over the war.<sup>157</sup> For many the War was not *finished*. Australia was on the losing side and the Defence Force left the Forgotten Six behind in *hostile territory*. They were Australians. Their resting places were not in a 'corner of a foreign field that is forever' ours. Loaded with the body's symbolism, the act of *snatching back* the Forgotten Six from Vietnam was a manifestation of the political reason for mounting recovery operations.

Previous discussions revealed the empathy of the veteran community with the members of the families of the Forgotten Six, reflecting the veterans' sense of a moral obligation to the men and their families. Peter Aylett identified this moral obligation:

It's very important to actually do all you can to bring these soldiers home. So I think put it down to one thing, it might sound silly: It's a moral obligation.<sup>158</sup>

This notion of a moral obligation owed to the families of the missing was quite prevalent among veterans. I recall saying:

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<sup>155</sup> Numerous members of all political persuasions spoke about the recovery of Parker and Gillson, Fisher, and Herbert and Carver. Howard, 'Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives, 12 June: Private Peter Gillson and Lance Corporal Richard Parker'; M. Turnbull, 'Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives, 13 October: Private David Fisher', Canberra, ACT, Commonwealth of Australia, Hansard, 2008, pp. 8785–6; K. Rudd, 'Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives, 13 August: Pilot Officer Robert Carver and Flying Officer Michael Herbert', Canberra, ACT, Commonwealth of Australia, Hansard, 2009, p. 44; and, Rann, 'House of Assembly, 8 September: Condolence Motion: Flying Officer Michael Herbert'. The politicians did not mention Gillespie simply because the various Houses of Parliament were in recess at the time of Gillespie's recovery.

<sup>156</sup> Sledge, *Soldier Dead: How We Recover, Bury, and Honor Our Military Fallen*, pp. 14–27.

<sup>157</sup> In 2011, the RSL proposed entering into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Vietnamese Veterans' Association. The regular members strenuously opposed any such rapprochement. Anon., 'Should veterans reconcile with former enemies?', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 Oct. 2011, p. 12.

<sup>158</sup> Hawkins, 'Behind Enemy Lines: Part 1', Peter Aylett, 1 min.

It's our sacred duty to ... [the] men who gave their lives. ... We, as a nation, have a moral obligation to their families. That's how I see it and that's what's driven us. We're doing it for the families.<sup>159</sup>

Earlier discussions showed the importance of the body in the grieving process. Hence, returning the men's bodies to the families met an important need, one the wider community evidently perceived.

Hence, these three issues—the politics of the body, the moral obligation, and the body's place in the grieving process—underpinned the wider community's perception of the need and benefits of recovering the Forgotten Six and bringing them home.

A number of other interesting phenomena accompanied this healing process including the expression of ownership; the experiences around going back to Vietnam; and, relating to the Vietnamese people.

Expressing ownership involved taking ownership of the problem, specifically the men's initial non-recovery and their eventual recovery. In the final analysis, the ADF had the *responsibility* for the men's recovery. Essentially, they *owned* the cases. However, during the recoveries, a degree of *tribalism* emerged based on unit associations or affiliations and various groups claimed ownership of the men. The emotional outpourings associated with the men's recovery and repatriation often reflected this ownership.

The ADF demonstrated ownership by taking over the cases of Fisher, Herbert and Carver. Speaking of the period after 2007, Minister Griffin noted how the ADF demonstrated ownership:

I think it was very much, it was that pride, it was that sense of 'these [the MIAs] are our people, we have got a responsibility here and we have got the expertise.'<sup>160</sup>

Ownership also operated *within* the ADF itself. In April 2009, AHU carried out most of the in-country work leading to the finding of the crash site of Herbert and

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<sup>159</sup> Powell, 'The Hunt for Magpie 91', p. 18.

<sup>160</sup> Griffin went on to explain: 'I think in the background was the notion we [meaning the ADF] are not very happy about being behind the eight ball in terms of action being taken in this area over such a period of time so we want to show that we are in front of the game'. Griffin, 'The recovery of Australian MIAs from Vietnam'.

Carver's aircraft. RAAF subsequently and understandably took over these cases; however, some operatives in Army were not happy.<sup>161</sup>

Ownership was also apparent within OAH. The notion of ownership initially emerged within OAH during the investigative stages. Peter Aylett, who located the Gillespie crash site in February 2004, recalled, 'I felt that ownership's not a good thing, but the Gillespie case was my case, due to Tom [Blackhurst] and ... my ego [probably]'.<sup>162</sup> Although I, as the founder of OAH was more than happy that the Government and the ADF took over running the Gillespie, Fisher, Herbert and Carver investigations, I still maintained a close watch on these cases.<sup>163</sup> Ownership later surfaced during the repatriation process. Trevor Hagan, a comrade of Parker, expressed his feeling of ownership at the hand-back ceremony in Hanoi, 'I felt relief, I said at last now we got 'em ... [and] we're taking 'em home'.<sup>164</sup>

Peripheral persons often displayed ownership. After the Parker and Gillson reception at Richmond in June 2007, Trevor Hagan observed:

There was blokes there that ... didn't do anything ... to say keep going, here's a quid, or anything, and they were there getting the photos taken and everything and they had nothing to do with it.<sup>165</sup>

In addition, upon the recovery of John Gillespie in 2007, 9 Squadron RAAF, the owners of the helicopter involved in the Gillespie incident came forward to stake their

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<sup>161</sup> Army kindly paid for Manns to travel to Hanoi for the hand-back ceremony for Herbert and Carver but Manns was not funded to attend the funerals. Manns, 'ADF involvement in the recovery of Australian MIAs from Vietnam and other general MIA matters'.

<sup>162</sup> Aylett, 'Involvement with Operation Aussies Home and the recovery of Australian MIAs from Vietnam'. Aylett's friend, Tom Blackhurst also died in the Gillespie loss incident.

<sup>163</sup> Julian Mather, the cinematographer who filmed the two episodes of the ABC documentary, 'Behind Enemy Lines' in 2007, noted the mantra of OAH appeared to be 'There's no "I" in team'. J. Mather, 'Behind Enemy Lines—a cameraman's notes', Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Sydney, NSW, <<http://www.abc.net.au/austory/content/2007/s2059827.htm>>, accessed 29 Dec. 2011. My spelling of the word was different: 'TIAM', meaning 'These Investigations Are Mine'.

<sup>164</sup> Hagan, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Richard Parker)'.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid. Speaking about the same event at Richmond, Walter Pearson, a long-time member of OAH observed something similar. Pearson noted, 'When we found those two, suddenly, everyone was prepared to jump on the bandwagon and ... every man and his dog was out at Richmond to be part of it. But before that, they were a bit scarce on the ground'. W. Pearson, 'Involvement with Operation Aussies Home and the recovery of Australian MIAs from Vietnam', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], 17 May 2011, Randwick, NSW.

claim.<sup>166</sup> Finally, ownership was also apparent at the funerals. Walter Pearson noted at the funeral of Fisher in 2008, 'the SAS Association ... [was] there, claiming David [Fisher] as their own'.<sup>167</sup>

Some individual reactions were complex. Trevor Hagan acknowledged in April 2007 he 'felt relief' when he received news that OAH recovered Parker.<sup>168</sup> However, he later admitted he was 'a bit cheesed off' because he was not in Vietnam to help unearth Parker and Gillson's remains.<sup>169</sup> Colin Butterworth, a comrade of Parker and Gillson also lamented he 'wasn't able to be there, along with the other guys to help bring their bodies home'.<sup>170</sup>

In summary, a number of reasons appear to explain the manifestation of this latent ownership. First, in some instances, ownership emerged because of the effort individuals expended toward resolving the cases, particularly for members of the ADF and OAH. Second, the sense of ownership expressed by some reflected the strong ties survivors had with the decedents. Third, some overtly declared ownership to assuage their guilt arising from not having been overly involved with the men's recovery. Regardless of the reasons, various parties made clear statements of ownership and these declarations contextualised the concomitant healing.

For some veterans the idea of returning to Vietnam was a daunting prospect because of unpalatable memories.<sup>171</sup> However, there was the need to take part in in-country investigations and/or to attend the hand-back ceremonies in Hanoi.

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<sup>166</sup> Bob Stephens, a crewmember on the ill-fated helicopter, noted, 'John wasn't RAAF, he was Army. But he was a mate; he was part of our crew'. Wilson, 'War death lingers across the years'.

<sup>167</sup> Pearson, 'Involvement with Operation Aussies Home and the recovery of Australian MIAs from Vietnam'.

<sup>168</sup> Hagan, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Richard Parker)'.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid. In fact, Hagan was so 'cheesed off' that he even considered not attending Parker's funeral.

<sup>170</sup> Butterworth, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Richard Parker and Peter Gillson)'.

<sup>171</sup> Nevertheless, an Australian expatriate community happily resides in Vietnam, particularly around Vung Tau. Many of these expatriates are veterans, many of whom have engaged in philanthropic work over the years. As of Aug. 2012, 23 of these veteran expatriates were receiving pensions at various levels from the Australian Department of Veterans' Affairs. J. Rope, 'Veterans residing in Vietnam and receiving a pension from the Australian Department of Veterans' Affairs as of Aug. 2012', [e-mail to J. Bourke], 31 Aug. 2012, Canberra, ACT.

***'He'd got that monkey off his back'***

Some veterans returned to Vietnam to redress issues related to the men's loss. For example, the loss of Parker markedly affected Trevor Hagan. Returning to the loss incident site in 2005 was a cathartic experience for him because it allowed him to vindicate his actions of 8 November 1965.

This was gonna be able to prove to me, one, that there was [sic] people ... there; two, that they were dug in ...; and, three, we weren't telling lies to anyone when we said we'd hit a good position.<sup>172</sup>

Hagan returned to Vietnam with his wife and another couple sometime after Parker's recovery. Walter Pearson, who observed Hagan during the OAH excursions to Vietnam in November 2005 and January–February 2007 subsequently reported:

I ran in to him [Hagan] in Saigon sometime later with his mate and he was a different guy. ... He had really changed and I think the reason is that he'd got that monkey off his back.<sup>173</sup>

However, Bob Stephens, who was severely affected by his involvement in the Gillespie loss incident noted returning to Vietnam 'may work for some, but not others' acknowledging 'it has given [him] some closure'.<sup>174</sup> Nevertheless, to most veterans the experience of venturing back to Vietnam was enlightening and therapeutic.

Returning to Vietnam enabled veterans to re-focus their perceptions of the country and its people. In November 2005, on preparing to meet his former enemy from 1965 Hagan 'thought it'd be like going ... down [to] the RSL and talking about old times ... 'cos they were soldiers the same as I [was]'.<sup>175</sup>

During the in-country investigations, various Australian veterans contacted former enemies who unstintingly provided assistance to locate the Forgotten Six. Nguyen Van Bao, commander of the force that opposed A Company 1 RAR in November 1965 exemplified this cooperation. The Vietnamese veterans displayed 'a

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<sup>172</sup> Over the years, questions were raised regarding the strength of the enemy who thwarted the combat recoveries of Parker and Gillson on 8 Nov. 1965. Hagan recalled, 'no one would believe that they were dug in'. Hagan, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Richard Parker)'.

<sup>173</sup> Pearson, 'Involvement with Operation Aussies Home and the recovery of Australian MIAs from Vietnam'.

<sup>174</sup> Stephens, 'From warfare (1970–71) to welfare'.

<sup>175</sup> Hagan, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Richard Parker)'.



very compassionate attitude and they ... [helped] find our missing ... in all six cases'.<sup>176</sup>

Some veterans also readily assisted their former enemies. Bob Stephens and a number of his associates from 9 Squadron RAAF returned to Vietnam in 2008, and assisted a number of Vietnamese veterans who were members of the opposing force during the War.<sup>177</sup> Other veterans engaged in similar humanitarian endeavours. For example, a number of concerned Australian citizens carried out research to help locate the Vietnamese killed by the Australians during the War.<sup>178</sup>

The loss incident sites were also important to the Vietnamese. On the discovery of Parker and Gillson's remains:

[The Vietnamese] went away and bought incense and planted it around the site of the excavation site, and said a prayer, and left some fruit there for the departed spirits, and it was quite overwhelming ... (laughs) ... to say the least.<sup>179</sup>

Jack Thurgar, the AHU lead investigator, recalled a similar experience on recovery of Fisher's remains.

[The Vietnamese] held a small Buddhist ceremony where they blessed the ground and blessed the spirit to return safely to his loved ones. ... It was very sombre. Everyone was incredibly respectful. The remains were treated with great dignity.<sup>180</sup>

For those who made the effort, their interactions with the Vietnamese people contributed to the healing process. It was obvious to Australians who made contact with the former enemy that for them the war was over, and they had moved on.

In summary, the healing process started in 2005 with the first forays by OAH into Vietnam. Emotional outpourings at the repatriation ceremonies and the funerals of the Forgotten Six revealed the depth of feeling within the wider veteran community

<sup>176</sup> Bourke, 'Operation Aussies Home and the recovery of the Australian MIAs from Vietnam'.

<sup>177</sup> Assistance ranged from providing financial assistance to replace a thatched roof on a family dwelling to meeting medical and dental costs, which in some cases were substantial. Stephens, 'From warfare (1970–71) to welfare'.

<sup>178</sup> E. Campbell, 'The Wandering Souls', *Foreign Correspondent*, Released 7 Aug. 2008, Australian Broadcasting Commission, Sydney, NSW, [TV Documentary], <<http://www.abc.net.au/foreign/content/2012/s3562710.htm>>, accessed 10 Aug. 2012; T. Hyland, 'Peace at last for souls lost in war', *Sunday Age* (Melbourne), 24 Apr. 2011, pp. 1, 10; and, I. McPhedran, 'Missing in action, found in peace', *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 29 May 2010, p. 104. Three hundred thousand Vietnamese persons remain unaccounted-for from the War. Hawley, *The Remains of War: Bodies, Politics, and the Search for American Soldiers Unaccounted for in Southeast Asia*, p. 34; and, H. Kwon, *Ghosts of War in Vietnam*, Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 48.

<sup>179</sup> J. Bourke, 'Operation Aussies Home and the recovery of Parker and Gillson'.

<sup>180</sup> Boer, 'Last MIA to return home'.

around the men's loss and lengthy period of non-recovery. Investigative and recovery efforts, the opportunity to be part of the men's repatriation and subsequent commemoration, and the opportunity to refresh their understanding of the Vietnamese people underpinned the healing process.

As reflected in Figure 6–1 (page 242), while 'repositioning the dead' family members and comrades updated their narratives to incorporate the events surrounding the men's recovery; the narrators' part in such activities; their new relationships with the dead; and, most importantly, their fresh levels of closure.

***'The army had taken him away ... and now they have brought him back'***

The men's recovery was a challenging but rewarding experience for the family members and they updated narratives accordingly. Gillson's younger sister, Lorraine Wotherspoon recalled:

I have never been able to forget the two soldiers who knocked on our door with the bad news. I felt the army had taken him away ... and now they have brought him back where he belongs.<sup>181</sup>

The comrades similarly adjusted their narratives about the recovery of the Forgotten Six. They were able to complete the story of their involvement in the death event and the men's eventual recovery, and thereby help resolve the emotional guilt that some carried. Hence, the comrades' narratives now reflect a thread of healing.

Because the children of Gillson and Gillespie never personally knew their fathers, they inherited their grief narratives from others, mainly their mothers.<sup>182</sup> However, with the recovery of Gillson and Gillespie the children's experiences allowed them to update their narratives during 2002 to 2008. These narratives were positive and consolatory.

Grief narratives are all inclusive. The grief narratives sometimes incorporate accounts of other deaths and the associated grief. Shane Herbert, Michael Herbert's younger brother provided an interesting example of incorporating others into his grief

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<sup>181</sup> S. Shtargot, 'Soldier finds peace after 40 years in a foreign field', *Age* (Melbourne) 16 June 2007, p. 13.

<sup>182</sup> The similarities in the latent narratives of Gillson's widow and her elder son are evident by comparing the letter written to Gillson's Platoon Commander in Nov. 1965 and the son's eulogy, delivered at his father's funeral in June 2007. L. Gillson, 'Reply to a Condolence Letter'; and, R. Gillson Jr, 'Eulogy delivered on 15 June on the occasion of Peter Gillson's funeral at Melbourne, Vic.', Pascoe Vale, Vic., 2007.

narrative when he referred to his 'two brothers'. The second of the two brothers, Anthony Peter died in infancy.<sup>183</sup>

Similarly, the narrator may draw into their narrative people who may not have necessarily known the decedent, but were significant during their grieving experience. Lorraine Easton recalled, 'I raised my sons to know all about Peter, so both had a strong bond'.<sup>184</sup> The second son, Craig Hawes, although not related to Peter Gillson had been part of the widow's journey of grief over the years and provided support to his mother in her bereavement.<sup>185</sup> Including her second son in her story personalised Easton's account, but her elder son, Robert Gillson Jr did not appreciate the inclusion of Hawes in the family narrative. When delivering the eulogy at his father's funeral, Robert reflected: 'Your family, Mum and I are happy now. You never were and never will be forgotten'.<sup>186</sup> In Robert's narrative 'family' did not include Craig Hawes.<sup>187</sup>

The eulogy is a form of grief narrative that generally focuses on the deceased rather than the living. However, the memories of the decedent derive from the living and hence the living are often drawn into the eulogising narrative. Eulogising narratives need not adhere strictly to the facts. For example, Trevor Hagan's eulogy at Parker's funeral is a good example of a narrator selectively presenting facts.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> When interviewed in 2010, in relating his grief narrative Shane Herbert clearly indicated 'I'm the youngest of four children'. Herbert, 'Having a brother (Michael Herbert) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'. After the bridge naming ceremony in Adelaide in Dec. 2011, Shane commented: 'It's massive ... and I'm very tired now but it's the end of something very significant for me. ... It's tough, it's been tough, but I'm carried by the spirit of family, the spirit of the family, the spirit of my father, my mother, my brother, two brothers, it carries me'. Herbert, 'Renaming of the old King Street Bridge as the Michael Herbert Bridge in the City of Holdfast Bay'.

<sup>184</sup> N. Wilson, 'Tears of joy for hero: Digger finally at rest', *Herald Sun* (Melbourne), 16 June 2007, p. 23.

<sup>185</sup> Lorraine Easton recalled a conversation with her son, Robert from 2007: "By the way mum, what's Craig got to do with all of this", and I just said, "Robert, he's my other son, that's why he has to deal with this. It's part of me; he's just my other son". Easton, 'Having a husband (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

<sup>186</sup> R. Gillson Jr, 'Euolgy delivered on 15 June on the occasion of Peter Gillson's funeral at Melbourne, Vic.'

<sup>187</sup> On 8 July 2007, the Vietnamese community in Melbourne held a service of thanksgiving for Gillson. Vietnamese Cultural Heritage Centre, 'A Vietnamese Community Service of Thanksgiving for the life of Private Peter Raymond Gillson: 8 July', [Unpublished Work], Sunshine North, Vic., 2007. Gillson's brother and Gillson's son attended the ceremony but Gillson's widow did not, because of friction between her and her son. 'I couldn't cope with the way my son was talking to me, so I didn't go'. Easton, 'Having a husband (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

<sup>188</sup> T. Hagan, 'Euolgy delivered on 12 June on the occasion of Richard Parker's funeral at Woden, ACT', Aroona, Qld, 2007. Hagan took a degree of licence with the facts in his eulogy to

Persons other than family members and comrades developed narratives about their involvement in the recovery of the Forgotten Six. These narratives are also individual interpretations. Bruce Billson has his narrative—*Team Australia*.<sup>189</sup> On occasions, these narratives attempted to rewrite history or at least to manipulate or selectively present the facts to the benefit of the narrator or their organisation.

Grief narratives in particular are very durable items. In some cases, adult family members wanted to ensure the family narratives were passed to subsequent generations, such as the grandchildren of Gillson and Gillespie or the children of the decedents' siblings. Robert Gillson Jr said burying his father meant there was a place where he could take his 'kids and they could bring their kids for years to come'.<sup>190</sup> This desire to pass on the men's stories to subsequent generations was prevalent and emerged in three other families.<sup>191</sup>

The extent to which members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades were prepared to share their grief narratives with others varied.<sup>192</sup> Even after the recovery of the Forgotten Six, some opted not to tell their stories.<sup>193</sup>

The romantic notion that clear skies dominated the families' journeys after the men's recovery is not always correct. The individuality of some family members and the intensity of emotions created tensions within at least two families. Fundamentally, this disharmony revolved around the perceptions individuals held regarding their positions within the family's hierarchy of grief.

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Parker. However, Hagan was presenting *his* narrative, the way he chose to remember events and the way he wants others to remember him.

<sup>189</sup> Billson referred to the team that excavated the Gillespie site as 'Team Australia', reflecting the involvement of OAH members alongside the ADF participants.

<sup>190</sup> Gillson Jr, 'Having a father (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'. Similarly, Fiona Pike, Gillespie's daughter reflected, 'I can see that bringing home his [her father's] remains is very important for my two boys. ... My boys are part of all this too'. Hardie, 'Medic's body comes home'.

<sup>191</sup> Hendrie, 'Having a husband (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'; Hardie, 'Medic's body comes home'; and, Herbert, 'Renaming of the old King Street Bridge as the Michael Herbert Bridge in the City of Holdfast Bay'.

<sup>192</sup> Cecily Ellis, a friend of Parker's widow reveals how a social space can be shared by describing how Parker had been part of her life and the lives of his widow, Wendy and another friend, Jillene Olsen, 'the nicest memory of all was to be part of Wendy and Tiny's journey together. Tiny, you have always been part of our lives and always will be. We thank you for the memories'. Anon., 'At last, family and friends farewell lost mate', *Canberra Times*, 13 June 2007, pp. 1–2.

<sup>193</sup> The reason behind individuals not wanting to share their narratives may have been a reluctance toward allowing outsiders to examine, interpret and perhaps rewrite *their* narratives.

OAH established *conduits* to five of the six families.<sup>194</sup> These conduits operated with other external entities, mainly the Government and the ADF. Sometimes one or more individuals shared this role, depending on the level of cohesion within the families; the expertise or interests of family members; and, their geographical disposition.<sup>195</sup> Besides sourcing or receiving information from outside the family, these conduits subsequently exercised control of such information within the family. Hence, conduits had the potential to exert ownership of their case by controlling information. The way in which OAH and the authorities passed information to the families was fraught with difficulties and potential tensions. Selective distribution of information by a conduit, especially where the central mourning figure was not acting as the conduit, was in some cases detrimental to the families' cohesion. During the repositioning of the dead, in at least two families *mavericks* emerged to challenge the central mourning figure and this caused disruption within these families.

***'I was bringing Peter home and losing a family'***

By 2002, Lorraine Easton was the central mourning figure in the Gillson family and Robert Gillson Jr initially acted as the principal conduit, at least until mid-2005 when Easton became more involved. Within the Gillson family, a degree of disharmony had been simmering for some years. In 2007, prior to the repatriation of Gillson's remains, Easton observed, 'My son [Robert] didn't want me to be a part of bringing Peter home. He thought I'd be an embarrassment to go to Vietnam'. Later Easton conceded 'doing the journey home from Vietnam, I knew I was bringing Peter home and losing a family'.<sup>196</sup> Thus, the tension within the Gillson family came to the surface because of friction between Gillson's widow and her elder son—who had never known his father.

***'I went there to collect my father's elder son'***

Since the death of Michael Herbert's mother in early 2003, family members generally acknowledged John Herbert as the family's central mourning figure. However, because of his state of health this function devolved to his son, Shane. However, there was a degree of fragmentation within the Herbert family ever since Michael Herbert was lost.

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<sup>194</sup> Sometimes conduits were appointed by consensus within the families; sometimes they were self appointed and acted unilaterally; sometimes conduits were sought out by external agencies in order to communicate with the families.

<sup>195</sup> Additional conduits were sometimes required to cater for the geographical dispersion of the family members (Parker, Gillson and Herbert).

<sup>196</sup> Easton, 'Having a husband (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

Consequently, an underlying current of disharmony existed within the family during the recovery, repatriation and commemoration of Michael Herbert.<sup>197</sup> Shane Herbert held clear ideas on the purpose of his trip to Hanoi: 'I did not go to Vietnam to pick up my brother: I went there to collect my father's elder son'.<sup>198</sup> Shane Herbert did not see himself as the centre of this business and his attitude significantly ameliorated tensions within the family.

The discussion above highlights the delicate nature of interactions within bereaved families. Furthermore, the discussion illuminates the importance of the hierarchy of grief and the desirability—in the interests of harmony—for individuals to understand and work within their hierarchy.

### ***SUMMARY OF 'REPOSITIONING THE DEAD'***

The following summarises the main issues that arose during 'repositioning the dead'.

The discovery of remains resulted in some deep-rooted emotions surfacing and some family members and comrades found it difficult to deal with the repatriations and funerals. Seeing the coffins for the first time was a highly emotional experience, which consolidated the notion that the men were dead. Nevertheless, in most cases reactions were positive.

The funerals brought a sense of finality and relief to many mourners. The notion that the men were home on Australia soil permeated the thoughts of many, with the commonly held view the men returned home, complete in body and spirit. Nevertheless, at least one of the men's comrades questioned the idea of having an actual funeral when the coffins contained only minimal remains.

The foci of the members of the families and the men's comrades progressively moved from the loss incident sites to the grave or the commemorative plaques of Fisher and Carver, but in most instances visits to these commemorative sites are not a ritual.

Even though some members of the families of the Forgotten Six initially considered the proper investigation of their cases might be as important as recovering the men's remains, their eventual recovery brought a number of benefits. Knowledge

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<sup>197</sup> Kerryn Herbert, Michael Herbert's sister did not join with her father and her brother in granting POA to me in 2008, preferring to deal directly with RAAF HQ. Ms Herbert stood alone.

<sup>198</sup> Shane Herbert provided this insight as a supplementary comment immediately following an interview with me in Adelaide on 29 Oct. 2010.

gained during these processes redressed the ambiguity that plagued many family members and comrades of the Forgotten Six. For some comrades, the men's recovery was a final act of reparation, which finalised an uncompleted task and assuaged the guilt around abandoning the men in Vietnam.

On 'repositioning the dead', with the unequivocal acceptance of death and the funeral's finality, family members and comrades achieved enhanced levels of closure. Nonetheless, in many instances their grief continues to this day, although in a modified form. Most maintain on-going connections with the decedents within their social spaces. The maintenance of such bonds is an important part of the closure process.

The bureaucracy's redemptive upswing that began in 2006 led to a rapprochement between the families and the authorities. The Forgotten Six were no longer 'un-dead'—the six wandering souls returned home from the battlefields of Vietnam—'Home at Last'.

Healing, as it marched alongside the process of closure was especially evident during the reception ceremonies at Richmond and Point Cook and at the funerals of each of the Forgotten Six. The healing emerged not only among family members and comrades, but also within the wider community and especially among veterans.

Family members, comrades and others updated their narratives to include details of the men's recovery, their repatriation, their funerals, and the emotional and cognitive consequences.

Certain behaviours within two families during this period highlighted the need for individuals to appreciate the hierarchy of grief that exists within bereaved families, in the interests of maintaining family harmony.

The members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades who witnessed the return of the Forgotten Six are now able to relegate the black thoughts of former years to the distant confines of their memories, and at least in part may now forget the black days they experienced over three decades or more. Residual grief, sorrow, sadness and lament may still manifest but in general, an overwhelming sense of relief and freedom to move on now exists. With the resilience of the human spirit, the survivors' lives can now become a much easier road. Nevertheless, some family members and comrades died with levels of closure that were sub-optimal, before the recovery of the Forgotten Six. It was unfortunate the men's recovery did not take place earlier.

## CHAPTER 7: THEORISING EXPERIENCES

### **INTRODUCTION**

Following my intimate engagement with the experiences of the family members and comrades of the Forgotten Six before during and after their recovery and my review of the contribution of OAH, the Government and the ADF toward such recoveries, I examine the experiences of these family members and comrades during the period from 1965 to 2011, at a higher level of abstraction.<sup>1</sup> Overall consideration of such experiences identifies the core phenomenon at the heart of this study. Examination of this phenomenon, from the point of view of family members and comrades identifies the experiential states they endured, and the strategies they used to deal with the men's loss and eventual recovery. Further scrutiny of their experiences and behaviours reveals the nature of *closure* leading to the articulation of a substantive theory regarding closure around ambiguous loss, unresolved grief and uncompleted tasks. A comparison between my findings and extant theories identifies the findings that potentially contribute to the bank of knowledge in the subject areas. The penultimate section of the chapter discusses the transferability of these findings.

### **MANAGING CONTENTIOUS LIFE ISSUES**

The experiences of the members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades while 'living with the un-dead', and later during the 'repositioning the dead' formed the basis for a descriptive narrative, which enabled the identification of the core phenomenon.<sup>2</sup> The overarching phenomenon that emerged was *Managing Contentious Life Issues*, which revolved around how family members and comrades managed the issues surrounding the men's loss (1965–71), their non-recovery, and their eventual recovery and return to Australia (2007–09). The issues initially encountered by the family members of the Forgotten Six and some of their comrades revolved around unresolved grief and ambiguous loss. For some of the comrades, the salient issue they faced centred on their failure to recover the men or their remains, resulting in feelings

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter uses the analytical tools espoused by Strauss and Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*, pp. 116–22; Strauss and Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for developing Grounded Theory*, pp. 143–61; and, Corbin and Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, pp. 103–14.

<sup>2</sup> Corbin and Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, pp. 106–7, 263–6.



of guilt accompanied by high levels of ambiguity. The successful recovery of the remains of the Forgotten Six ultimately redressed these two issues, partly at least.

Recasting the descriptive narrative in terms of the major analytic categories enabled identification of the phenomena that constituted causal conditions, context, intervening conditions, actions/interactions and outcomes.<sup>3</sup>

The men's loss, their non-recovery for 36 years or more and their eventual recovery (2007–09) were the primary causal conditions that gave rise to the core phenomenon. The activities of OAH, the Government and the ADF contributed to these causal conditions because such activities resulted in the recovery of the Forgotten Six.

The core phenomenon manifested within the dynamic cultural, social and political environment in Australia over the years from 1965 to 2011. The changing attitudes toward death and grief and increased permissiveness within Australian society were significant features of that environment. The personal attributes of individual family members and comrades, their aspirations and changing family structures also contributed to the context within which these people lived their everyday lives and managed their contentious issues.

A wide range of intervening conditions, over which family members and comrades had little or no control constrained or abetted their actions/interactions as they managed their respective issues. Some conditions derived from far afield. The Vietnamese Department of Foreign Affairs determined the scope and timing of in-country investigations and provided invaluable assistance in searching for the Forgotten Six. Various US agencies provided advice and information to support these investigations.<sup>4</sup>

Closer to home, apart from their efforts in 1984, until 2006 the Australian Government and the Australian Defence Force were obdurate and recalcitrant. Their employment of anachronistic policies regarding searching for MIAs, and a lack of official interest in the Forgotten Six prevented the members of their families and their

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<sup>3</sup> Strauss and Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*, pp. 124–9; and, Corbin and Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, pp. 107, 266–70.

<sup>4</sup> The identification of these the wider issues invoked the use of the *Conditional Matrix*, a tool that facilitates the understanding of the importance of micro and macro contextual factors that impinge on the core phenomenon. Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis* (2006), p. 118; and, Corbin and Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, pp. 90–5.

comrades from gaining State assistance to aid in resolving their issues. From time-to-time family members in particular contended with spurious reporting by the media and in one instance by the authorities.<sup>5</sup>

From 2007 to 2009, successful recovery activities and lobbying by OAH encouraged the ADF to engage in recovery efforts. For the most part persons other than family members and comrades of the Forgotten Six carried out these investigations and recovery operations, except five of the men's comrades assisted OAH on particular occasions.

After the loss and until the recovery of the men's remains, family members and comrades necessarily focused on their everyday lives. Within their respective contexts, while 'living with the un-dead' family members and comrades emotionally and behaviourally reacted and adapted to the changing conditions. However, individual personalities and the varying contexts within which the family members and comrades operated, variably affected their efforts to manage their respective issues.

Progressively, most family members and comrades of the Forgotten Six accepted the men were dead and by 2000 held little hope of determining the men's fate or recovering their remains. During this period, according to their individual needs and without the men's recovery, family members and comrades achieved certain levels of emotional closure.

The families initiated the most important action toward the men's eventual recovery by authorising or requesting investigation of their cases. From 2002 to 2008, family members, principally those members with executive authority assessed whether to risk the extant levels of emotional closure achieved by some, against the possible benefits of further investigations.

After the recovery of the men's remains, family members and comrades repositioned the dead and engaged in repatriation and commemorative activities during 2007 to 2010. These activities resulted in the attainment of enhanced levels of closure commensurate with individual emotional needs.

*Process* encourages the identification and scrutiny of the relationships between changing contexts, intervening conditions and actions/interactions over time. In some

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<sup>5</sup> Chapter 5 contains details of some of this media reportage, as well as details of the report in 2001 by Australian authorities, occasioned by the US JTF-FA advising one of their an Investigative Elements had located Herbert and Carver's aircraft, which was incorrect.

instances, changing contexts and/or actions/interactions produced outcomes that necessitated further action/interactions. Acknowledgement of *Process* promotes an understanding of the progression within and between related phenomena.

In summary, an examination of experiences of the members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades during the period from 1965 to 2011 enabled the identification of the phenomenon at the heart of this study, *Managing Contentious Life Issues*. Further consideration of these experiences identified causal, contextual and intervening conditions, actions/interactions and outcomes related to the core phenomenon, highlighting the effect of *Process*.

### ***AFFECTIVE/EXPERIENTIAL STATES***

Understanding the nature of *Managing Contentious Life Issues* requires a focus on the perceptions of the family members and comrades of the Forgotten Six and enables the scrutiny of the core phenomenon's properties. Two significant properties emerge, first, *The Extent to which Other Parties Might Provide Assistance* to account more fully for the Forgotten Six and second, the *Efficacy of Personal Efforts* made by the family members and comrades to redress their respective issues. Examining these properties elucidates the various states-of-mind experienced by the individuals affected.<sup>6</sup>

Members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades generally believed the State was responsible for accounting for the men. The dimensions of the property, *The Extent to which Other Parties Might Provide Assistance* ranged from *Improbable* to *Probable*. *Process* entered the equation and the assessments of the likely availability of external assistance changed over time.

Three factors influenced family members and comrades in their assessments of their personal efforts. First, from a *practical* perspective, they needed information regarding the circumstances of the men's loss and their likely fate. The extent and the quality of information initially available provided a base line against which survivors evaluated the effectiveness of their subsequent efforts to elicit information. Second, not all *personal efforts* related to practical matters. Some were cognitive and/or

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<sup>6</sup> After the loss of Gillespie in 1971, the number of primary bereaved totalled 30, but the number of the men's comrades who could be included as 'persons affected' is difficult to determine. The number might be in the order of 30 to 40, or higher. In the mid-1990s, approximately a dozen veterans swelled the number of affected comrades, although the deaths of other persons emotionally linked to the Forgotten Six partially offset this increase. Until the mid-1990s, many veterans did not regard the men's loss as contentious. Hence, in 2005 the total number of individuals affected was approximately 60 to 70, at least.

psychological. Family members and comrades progressively sought some level of closure and this provided a *subjective* yardstick, which assisted in gauging the effectiveness of their efforts. Third, the aspirations, needs and wants of family members and comrades changed over time. The emergence of intervening conditions and changing stages in the life cycles of these individuals propelled their aspirations, needs and wants and influenced their assessments of the efficacy of their personal efforts. The dimensions of the property, *Efficacy of Personal Efforts*, ranged from *Minimal* to *Effective*; however, most family members and comrades generally felt they had done their best under the prevailing, ambiguous circumstances.

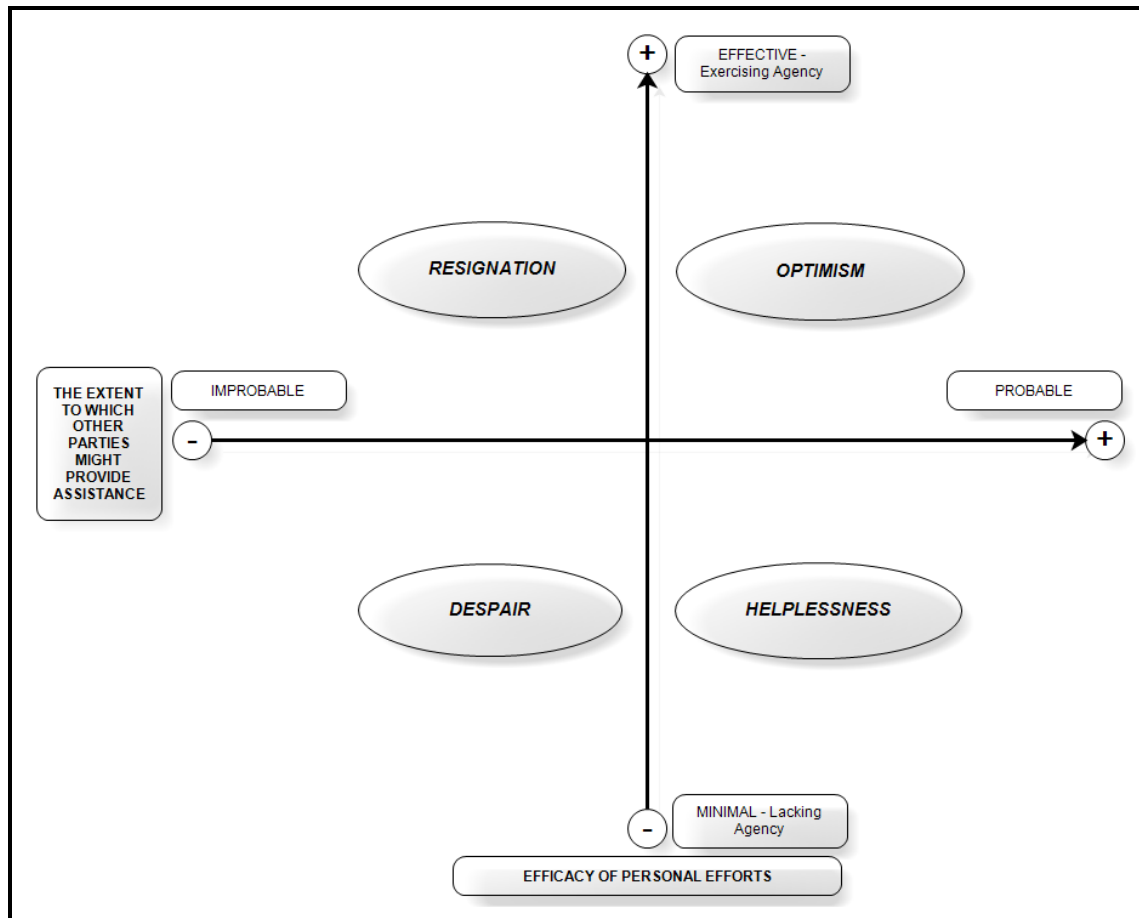
Individuals made their various assessments within the contemporaneous cultural, social and political environment. Others may have reached different conclusions because of the availability of additional facts or by the application of different value systems. However, unless *others* had the power to sway a given individual, such arguments became irrelevant. Multiple realities emerged.

Figure 7–1 offers a matrix of the core phenomenon's properties and dimensions. The horizontal axis plots the extent to which family members and comrades believed others might provide assistance, and the vertical axis plots their assessments of the efficacy of their own efforts. Assessing their position along the continua of these axes provides an understanding of how individuals *saw themselves* managing their respective issues. These assessments reveal the various *affective/experiential* states-of-mind traversed by family members and comrades, reflecting their perceptions of their realities. The four quadrants in Figure 7–1 illustrate these *affective/experiential* states: *Optimism*, *Helplessness*, *Despair* and *Resignation*. There were obviously degrees within these states: an individual could be *extremely* optimistic or *quietly* optimistic.

Theoretically, Figure 7–1 enables the positioning of an individual within the matrix at any given point-in-time. However, because the assessments of family members and comrades changed over time, it was sometimes difficult to position individuals definitively within a particular state at a given point-in-time. Furthermore, the boundaries between adjacent experiential states were often porous or overlapped. This overlapping was particularly evident between *Helplessness* and *Despair*; and, in some cases between *Despair* and *Resignation*. In addition, establishing the boundary between *Optimism* and *Resignation* was occasionally problematic. As family members and comrades moved from one state to another, they may have experienced a hybrid state, embracing two primary states. Furthermore, confused or psychologically

compromised individuals may have simultaneously experienced more than one state. Nevertheless, over time singular and particular states became more permanent.

**Figure 7–1: Properties and Dimensions of the Core Phenomenon**



With the initial reporting of the loss of Parker, Fisher, Herbert and Carver and their initial designation as MIA, some family members and comrades reacted with a degree of *Optimism*. They remained optimistic while feeling they were contributing effectively to the resolution of their issues, and with the hope of external assistance in ultimately finding their lost relative or comrade. For example, on receiving notification their sons were MIA, William Fisher and John Herbert, the fathers of David Fisher and Michael Herbert, although distraught were initially optimistic. On 28 September 1969, William Fisher requested advice as to the height from which his son fell. Similarly, on 5 November 1970, John Herbert sought information from RAAF HQ Edinburgh, South Australia regarding the search for Herbert and Carver. Both had knowledge of Service procedures and believed the authorities would provide assistance. However, the assistance provided was limited and the fathers progressively moved toward a state of *Resignation*.

Some of the men's comrades also displayed a degree of optimism, even if it was ill-founded. For example, Barry Carpenter, a comrade of Herbert observed, 'when I

left [Vietnam], I was still saying to myself, they'll find him. They will find him'.<sup>7</sup> Carpenter participated in the search for Herbert and Carver's aircraft and felt he contributed as much as he could in determining the men's fate. On leaving Vietnam, he relied on the efforts of others, hopefully to finalise his contentious issue; however, this did not happen quickly.

Shortly after the authorities reported their son as MIA, Herbert's parents optimistically contemplated the possibility the Vietnamese might be holding him prisoner. This level of optimism continued over the next decade.<sup>8</sup> However, by 1984 their optimism had subsided.<sup>9</sup> Carver's parents also quietly held an ingrained hope their son might be alive as a POW. In early 1984, Robert Carver's father, Syd pondered 'we don't know yet that he has gone definitely'.<sup>10</sup>

In 1984, prior to the Government's Mission to Vietnam, many families experienced a resurgence of *Optimism* but the Mission's failure to provide any new information quickly stymied these optimistic states-of-mind. Robert Gillson Jr, Peter Gillson's son, recalled some officials visited the family and they 'went on their mission, came back, wrote a report and that was about it. It seemed to be uneventful'.<sup>11</sup> Shane Herbert, Michael Herbert's brother and Carver's parents had similar experiences.<sup>12</sup> Progressively, these individuals moved toward *Resignation*.

In a limited number of cases, despite setbacks such as the fruitless Government Mission of 1984, *Optimism* persisted from the time of the men's loss until their recovery (2007–09). For example, Pat Woodland, Parker's sister maintained her

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<sup>7</sup> Carpenter, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Michael Herbert)'.

<sup>8</sup> Herbert, 'Request for details of inquiries being carried out regarding the disappearance of Michael Herbert and Robert Carver'; Herbert, 'Request regarding Government intentions to follow up on a POW report'; and, H. Piper, 'MIA: Missing-in-Action', John Herbert, 15 min. The suggestion that missing servicemen were being held as POW in Vietnam was commonplace in America after the War ended. R. C. Doyle, 'Unresolved mysteries: The myth of the missing warrior and the government deceit theme in the popular captivity culture of the Vietnam War', *Journal of American Culture*, Vol. 15, Issue No. 2, 1992, pp. 1-18. Non-release of these supposed prisoners was a major impediment to the normalisation of relations between the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the US.

<sup>9</sup> Haran, 'God comforted me: Mother: Thirteen years of anguish'.

<sup>10</sup> H. Piper, 'MIA: Missing-in-Action', Syd Carver, 24 min.

<sup>11</sup> Gillson Jr, 'Having a father (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

<sup>12</sup> Herbert, 'Having a brother (Michael Herbert) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'; Carver, 'Having a brother-in-law (Robert Carver) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'; and, H. Piper, 'MIA: Missing-in-Action'.

optimism for 42 years and believed her brother was 'going to turn up' of his own volition. It was not until OAH recovered Parker's remains in 2007 that Woodland accepted her brother was dead.<sup>13</sup>

During 2005 to 2008, the six families agreed to or requested investigation of their cases, hoping that investigation by an external agency might help resolve their contentious issues. Most family members and comrades experienced *Optimism* during 2007 to 2009 as OAH and the ADF progressively investigated the six cases and recovered the men's remains.<sup>14</sup>

Within *Helplessness* and *Despair*, some family members and comrades doubted the effectiveness of their personal efforts and felt they lacked agency. *Helplessness* was associated with the hope that somebody else would provide assistance. In contrast, *Despair* was associated with an expected lack of support.

In late 1965, following the report of Parker and Gillson's loss, Pat Woodland and Gillson's widow, Lorraine Easton optimistically anticipated assistance from the authorities. Woodland corresponded with CARO seeking information on Parker but instead received 'a letter to say that he [Parker] was missing in action, presumed dead; that's all it said'.<sup>15</sup> Easton similarly tried but was unsuccessful in her attempts to correspond with the Army.<sup>16</sup> Both felt *Helpless* in their efforts to attend to their contentious issues.<sup>17</sup> The realisation that external assistance was not likely to be available eventually resulted in their experiencing *Despair*.

While *Optimistic*, Joan Herbert, Michael Herbert's mother unsuccessfully lobbied the Government and approached eminent people worldwide to help resolve her

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<sup>13</sup> Woodland, 'Having a brother (Richard Parker) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

<sup>14</sup> For example, Peter Gillson's brother, Robert Gillson Snr revealed his *Optimism* during 2002 to 2007, recalling, 'when ... [OAH] started up [in 2002] ... I was rapt'. Gillson Snr, 'Having a brother (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

<sup>15</sup> P. Woodland, 'Request for information regarding Richard Harold Parker', [letter to CARO], undated July 1983, Batlow, NSW; Woodland, 'Having a brother (Richard Parker) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'; and, J. M. Egan, 'Richard Harold Parker', [letter to Mrs P. Woodland], 21 July 1983, Melbourne, Vic., as contained in NAA: B2458, 213963.

<sup>16</sup> Easton, 'Having a husband (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

<sup>17</sup> Pat Woodland had no contact with Wendy Mudford, Parker's widow until 2002. Nor did she have contact with any of her brother's comrades. Lorraine Easton had contact with her husband's comrades, but only for a short period after the loss. This isolation exacerbated the *Helplessness* experienced by these women.

dilemma. However, her letters to Mr Fairbairn, Minister for Defence twelve months after her son was lost highlighted an increasing level of *Despair*.<sup>18</sup> 'Please I beg of you, keep us in this matter'.<sup>19</sup> Herbert's mother eventually realised there would be no help and doubted the efficacy of her personal efforts. She subsequently, progressively and increasingly experienced *Despair* and/or *Resignation*.<sup>20</sup>

Carmel Hendrie, Gillespie's widow initially experienced *Despair* in the years immediately following her husband's death, 'I didn't cope very well ... [I] withdrew into myself ... I just wasn't coping'.<sup>21</sup> Nobody was about to assist Hendrie to resolve her contentious issues and she realised there was little she could do herself—she simply lacked agency.<sup>22</sup>

One can only imagine the *Helplessness* and *Despair* experienced by Bob Stephens, who was closely involved in the Gillespie loss incident in April 1971. Stephens returned to Australia the following month and spent 12 weeks in a psychiatric hospital, because of the trauma associated with his involvement in the Gillespie incident and his failure to extricate Gillespie from the burning helicopter.<sup>23</sup>

Nonetheless, the number of individuals who experienced *Helplessness* and/or *Despair* was relatively low and minimal data are available on them.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, it

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<sup>18</sup> Herbert, 'Request for advice regarding Government intentions to locate Michael Herbert and Robert Carver'; and, Herbert, 'Request for details of inquiries being carried out regarding the disappearance of Michael Herbert and Robert Carver'.

<sup>19</sup> Herbert, 'Request for advice regarding Government intentions to locate Michael Herbert and Robert Carver'.

<sup>20</sup> Over the 10 years after the 1970 loss of her son, Mrs Herbert 'wrote more than 600 letters to Vietnamese and other political leaders' enquiring about her son's fate. Ekins, 'Australian MIAs of the Vietnam War—"missing in action" or "no known grave"?'. 'I have written so many letters I have lost count. They have gone to Mr Whitlam, Mr Nixon, Pope Paul and Princess Grace in Monaco, who gave me an address in Switzerland'. Staff Reporters, 'Hopes kept alive for 2 airmen lost in Vietnam'.

<sup>21</sup> Hendrie, 'Having a husband (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>22</sup> In 1971, Army advised they did not intend to examine the crash site and indicated there would be no recoverable remains or artefacts. Headquarters Aust Force Vietnam, 'Remains of Lance Corporal J. F. Gillespie (Deceased)', [routine message PS 10733 of 210825Z July 1971 to Army HQ], Saigon, Vietnam, as contained in NAA: B2458, 3170244.

<sup>23</sup> Stephens, 'From warfare (1970–71) to welfare', p. 1; and, Wilson, 'War death lingers across the years'.

<sup>24</sup> Most individuals who experienced *Helplessness* and/or *Despair* are dead. However, archival sources clearly indicate the existence of these states. One possible explanation why more participants did not highlight the stages of *Helplessness* and *Despair* was because they gave interviews in support of this study after the recovery and commemoration of the Forgotten Six, and these participants were therefore in a relatively positive frame of mind.



would be reasonable to expect some members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades transiently endured these states over the years.

*Resignation* among family members and comrades occurred in response to their belief they had done their best in their efforts to find the Forgotten Six and perceived support from elsewhere was unlikely. For example, Army reported Gillson as KIA (BNR) and in 1965, Lorraine Easton was unable to gain assistance from the authorities to find him. Within a few years and dependent on her assessment of her situation, Easton progressively moved from *Despair* to *Despair/Resignation* or *Resignation*. Army also categorised Gillespie as KIA (BNR) and Carmel Hendrie, referencing the period shortly after her husband's death recalled 'We probably said, "oh well, we'll get on with life". Frank [Gillespie's father] wasn't fussed'.<sup>25</sup> Members of Gillespie's family generally entered *Resignation* within a relatively short period after his death.

Some took longer to transition to *Resignation*, especially when the authorities classified the casualty as MIA. However, ultimately, such a classification did not prevent family members and comrades entering the state of *Resignation*. For example, Shane Herbert, referencing the period around 2001 and 2002, confirmed the Herbert family had clearly entered *Resignation* by that time: 'I think it would have reached the point where the family had stopped pushing for it [the recovery of Michael Herbert]'.<sup>26</sup>

By 2000, most of the men's comrades experienced *Resignation*. Some considered the recovery of the men's remains might be politically difficult.<sup>27</sup> Others simply felt the practicalities of locating the bodies of the Forgotten Six would inhibit their recovery.<sup>28</sup> Speaking of the period between 2002 and 2006, Gordon Peterson, Parker's Acting Platoon Commander on the operation during which Parker went missing,

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<sup>25</sup> Hendrie, 'Having a husband (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>26</sup> Herbert, 'Having a brother (Michael Herbert) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'.

<sup>27</sup> Butterworth, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Richard Parker and Peter Gillson)'; Gillson Snr, 'Having a brother (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'; and, Saxton, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally David Fisher)'.

<sup>28</sup> Williams, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Peter Gillson)'.

recalled some veterans believed 'we [OAH] were wasting our bloody time ... anyway who's interested ... it's an impossible task and it'll never happen'.<sup>29</sup>

Following a short burst of *Optimism* during 2007 to 2009, after the men's recovery and their funerals members of the men's families and their comrades fell back into *Resignation*, although in some instances movement to this state was not immediate. Some individuals needed time to come to grips with what had happened in their lives. However, *Resignation* is now a more positive state, where individuals occasionally reflect on the issues that troubled them for so long.

Movement between states was associated with unique patterns of individual experience and was not ordered or sequential. The movement was dependent on the aspirations, needs and wants of the family members and comrades, and their individual assessments of prevailing circumstances. Nevertheless, with cases at a similar stage of resolution and considering the similarity of expectations of most family members and some comrades, they often and concurrently migrated to the same state. Occasionally they fleetingly visited other *states* because of a temporary change in their perceptions. For example, from the 1960s onwards Pat Woodland progressively entered *Resignation* but was occasionally blindly optimistic in not accepting the death of her brother.

In summary, analysis of the core phenomenon reveals how family members and comrades of the Forgotten Six developed their multiple perceptions of reality. These realities were reflected in various *affective/experiential* states-of-mind including *Optimism*, *Helplessness*, *Despair* and *Resignation*. Depending on their perception of reality, family members and comrades moved through different states in various sequences and at varying rates. Overall, they generally progressed from *Optimism* to *Resignation*. *Optimism* emerged while family members and comrades, believing they had done their best, felt external parties might provide assistance in finding their loved one or comrade. Within *Helplessness* and *Despair*, family members and comrades doubted the effectiveness of their personal efforts; however, *Helplessness* was associated with hope that external assistance might become available while an expected lack of support encouraged *Despair*. *Resignation* initially manifested when family members and comrades believed they had done their best while perceiving a lack of support from elsewhere. By 2000 or earlier, most family members and

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<sup>29</sup> Peterson, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Richard Parker)'.

comrades were in *Resignation*. The recovery, repatriation and commemoration of the Forgotten Six redressed, at least in part, the ambiguity surrounding their loss and, following a short burst of *Optimism* during 2005 to 2009, *Resignation* again emerged. This state of *Resignation* was different from the state experienced earlier and reflected contentment and embodied an acceptance of the status quo.

## **STRATEGIES**

Assessments of the likelihood of others providing assistance and evaluations of their personal efforts enabled family members and comrades to identify the actions/interactions necessary and feasible to redress their contentious issues. Implementation of such strategies resulted in practical and/or cognitive outcomes that provided feedback to family members and comrades who usually re-assessed their situations and sometimes re-mapped their strategies. The strategies adopted included *Activism*, *Substitution*, *Non-engagement* and *Acceptance*.

*Activism* consisted of taking positive steps toward obtaining details surrounding the loss of the Forgotten Six and the possible initiation of recovery activities. *Activism* was the most aggressive strategy and required interaction of family members and comrades with those in a position to provide assistance.<sup>30</sup> Family members, especially those with a strong bond to the missing men tended to employ this strategy. However, given the associated use of high levels of emotional energy, maintaining the strategy was expensive.

Family members and comrades invoked the strategy of *Activism* under various circumstances. Such circumstances included, first, receiving new information and/or needing further details; second, perceiving the responsible authorities were not making appropriate efforts to resolve the issues at hand; third, needing to exert agency; and, fourth, entering a new or potentially critical life-cycle phase.

In some cases, *Activism* emerged immediately after the loss events. For example, on receiving the casualty notifications, William Fisher and John Herbert actively sought further details from the authorities about the loss of their sons.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Unwittingly, the authorities avoided raising the expectations of family members by not engaging with them. Under such conditions, *Activism* was difficult.

<sup>31</sup> Appendix D provides additional detail of the requests for further information made by the fathers of Fisher and Herbert.

In February 1973, when Joan Herbert felt the authorities were not making appropriate efforts to resolve the issue at hand, she actively and publicly complained:

To this day, we have not had one word from anyone, Government or otherwise, about Michael's disappearance, except in reply to letters we have written. I have written so many letters I have lost count.<sup>32</sup>

The Gillespie family exerted agency in August 2006 when Carmel Hendrie, supported by her daughter and John Gillespie's sister requested the Government investigate their case.<sup>33</sup> A striking example of *Activism* through the exercise of agency emerged between 2002 and 2007 when several comrades of Parker, Gillson and Gillespie joined with OAH to carry out investigations in Vietnam and, in some cases lobbied the Australian Government directly.

Joan Herbert's entering a new phase of her life cycle, namely her approaching death, encouraged *Activism*. Mrs Herbert was a very religious Roman Catholic and firmly believed in the afterlife. While on her deathbed in January 2003 she declared, 'I'm going to see Michael and I'll be able to speak to Michael'.<sup>34</sup> Buoyed by her religious beliefs, Mrs Herbert engaged in one final stroke of *Activism*—going to meet her son in the afterlife to redress the contentious issue that plagued her for 32 years. Gordon Peterson also adopted an activist position because of a changing phase in his life cycle. While still employed, Peterson did not give much thought to Parker. However, after retiring in 1997, and with time on his hands Peterson began to reflect on the loss of Parker and joined OAH to give voice to his activist leanings.<sup>35</sup>

*Activism* usually abated when family members and comrades were satisfied with the processing of new information and the finalisation of associated actions/interactions. Alternatively and occasionally, a lack of progress ended in frustration and terminated *Activism*. By the early 1980s, *Activism* disappeared although

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<sup>32</sup> Staff Reporters, 'Hopes kept alive for 2 airmen lost in Vietnam', p. 9. The Herbert family, principally Joan Herbert, managed to elicit some replies from the Government, but others were not so fortunate. Robert Carver's sister-in-law, Susanna Carver recalled Carver's father wrote to Bill Hayden 'several times and never even got a reply, you know ... [he] really felt ... that the government just didn't want to know'. Carver, 'Having a brother-in-law (Robert Carver) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'.

<sup>33</sup> Gillespie, Hendrie and Pike, 'John Gillespie MIA'. As discussed in Chapter 5, the media, and perhaps OAH, encouraged the Gillespie family's activism by the presentation of new facts.

<sup>34</sup> Denny, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Michael Herbert)'. Joan Herbert died on 24 Jan. 2003.

<sup>35</sup> Peterson, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Richard Parker)'.

some later adopted the strategy because of a change in circumstances. Specifically, after 2002, with the possibility of external assistance becoming available, *Activism* reappeared and progressively became dominant for most key family members and to a lesser extent for some of the men's comrades.

*Substitution* saw family members and comrades engaging in some other form of focused activity as a distraction from their contentious issues. *Substitution* was an active strategy to the extent it was conscious and deliberate. *Substitution* emerged mainly during the years immediately following the men's loss.

Individuals sometimes employed *Substitution* either through necessity or independently to accommodate the needs of everyday life. For example, in 1984 there was a sense of necessity in John Herbert's engaging in everyday life, while at the same time dealing with the loss and non-recovery of his son:

I had to go ahead with my job. ... I'm a salesman and ... you had to get these things out of your mind because you know the world must go on regardless.<sup>36</sup>

The widows of Gillson and Gillespie employed *Substitution* in a more significant sense by choosing to enter into new relationships soon after the report of their husbands' deaths.<sup>37</sup> Their new associations partly replaced the emotional conflict constructed through their sense of loss.

*Non-engagement* emerged when family members and comrades, despite the context and available information, attempted to *escape* emotionally from the effect of their loss.<sup>38</sup> The matter was put-aside, rested and lay dormant. *Non-engagement* was not a case of not having a strategy; rather, it was an active strategy, albeit with passive overtones. Those who adopted *Non-engagement* acknowledged their conflict, even if only through non-engagement. Similarities existed between *Non-engagement* and *Substitution* in that the latter was a covert form of the former. *Non-engagement* was blatant whereas *Substitution* was justified by the need to engage with the day-to-day necessities of everyday life.

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<sup>36</sup> H. Piper, 'MIA: Missing-in-Action', John Herbert, 23 min. John Herbert had no choice because he had to earn a living for his family, as did many other family members and comrades.

<sup>37</sup> Easton, 'Having a husband (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'; and, Hendrie, 'Having a husband (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>38</sup> Many family members and comrades did not have access to all available information and this informational vacuum encouraged *Non-engagement*. On the other hand, in some instances where facts were available, family members and comrades simply chose to ignore them, especially when such facts conflicted with their aspirations.

Various circumstances encouraged *Non-engagement* including the emotional drain in dealing with the issues surrounding the Forgotten Six; not wanting to engage with the idea they might never return; perceiving engagement was not in accord with the prevailing subculture; having a relatively weak emotional bond with the missing or deceased person; and/or, simply considering the matter closed.

Susanna Carver, Robert Carver's sister-in-law recalled the need to encourage *Non-engagement* on the part of Carver's mother, Edna, because dealing with the conflict was too emotional:

Mum was very vulnerable and at that time there was a lot of press ... people would ring up and at different times: There would be different sightings of planes and in the end mum wasn't allowed to answer the phone 'cause it upset her too much.<sup>39</sup>

Similarly, on receiving notification of her husband's death, Carmel Hendrie simply did not want to entertain the idea her husband was dead, 'No! This is not happening. Don't tell me, I don't want to know'.<sup>40</sup>

Some family members did not want to engage with the thought that their loved-one might never return alive because such a thought was simply too painful to contemplate. For example, when the trunk containing her husband's personal effects was delivered to her in Napier, NZ, sometime in 1967, Parker's widow, Wendy Mudford 'put it in her cupboard and that was it'.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, the boxes containing Herbert's personal effects from Vietnam 'stayed ... [unpacked and] ... intact for the first seven or eight years'.<sup>42</sup> Pat Woodland also did not wish to engage with the available albeit limited facts concerning her brother.

Within the military in Vietnam, *Non-engagement* was enshrined in the prevailing subculture. Hence, the reaction of many of the men's comrades was to *not engage*, at least while on operations.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Carver, 'Having a brother-in-law (Robert Carver) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'.

<sup>40</sup> Hendrie, 'Having a husband (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>41</sup> Australian War Memorial, 'Accession Number: S02603; Veterans' Voices: Maroochy Libraries' Oral History Project: Interview of Trevor Hagan by Gary McKay on 31 May 2001'.

<sup>42</sup> Herbert, 'Having a brother (Michael Herbert) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'.

<sup>43</sup> For example, Bill Rolfe served in Vietnam in 2 RAR as a platoon commander from 29 Apr. 1970 to 10 Aug. 1970 and observed: 'As a young soldier, if you suffered casualties and deaths, you've got to be able to pick that same group of people up the next day and do the same job

In some instances, weak bonding engendered *Non-engagement*. For example, Paul Gillespie, one of John Gillespie's younger brothers was gay and John Gillespie was homophobic.<sup>44</sup> As a result and in part, Paul Gillespie was not motivated to engage with an issue he did not see as contentious.<sup>45</sup>

In 2002, Carmel Hendrie and Shane Herbert strenuously employed the strategy of *Non-engagement*.<sup>46</sup> Each considered their case closed—further action was not required. This *Non-engagement* persisted until 2006 and 2008 respectively. Similarly, in 2002 and until 2007 Ann Cowdroy, Fisher's sister did not require assistance with the investigation of her brother's case.

*Non-engagement* also appeared in a less overt form in which family members avoided discussing or connecting with their emotional conflict, particularly in front of younger family members. Generally, this situation persisted during the years immediately following the men's loss. For example, Shane Herbert recalled, 'Dad and I never really spoke about it [the loss of Michael]'.<sup>47</sup>

The simplest strategy was to accept the status quo and do nothing. *Acceptance* was a passive strategy and it was the default adopted when no other potentially fruitful strategy was available.

and get on with it'. B. Rolfe, 'The recovery of Australian MIAs from Vietnam', [Interviewed by J. Bourke], 17 Jan. 2011, Nicholls, ACT. Rolfe was Repatriation Commissioner from 2007 to 2010. Other officers who served in Vietnam had similar attitudes. For example, I served two tours in Vietnam as an Infantry officer and had a similar attitude to Rolfe, 'our philosophy was he's dead, pack him up and get him out of here and let's get on with the job. I'm sorry that's how it was, that's it'. Bourke, 'Operation Aussies Home and the recovery of the Australian MIAs from Vietnam'.

<sup>44</sup> Gillespie, 'Responses to questions raised by J. Bourke in relation to the Gillespie family'. Bill Host, a comrade of Gillespie and who for some time resided in the same general area as Paul Gillespie reported, 'He [Paul] was the one who reckons we shouldn't have done it [recover John Gillespie]'. Host, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally John Gillespie)'.

<sup>45</sup> The sister of Paul and John Gillespie, Christine Gillespie recalled, 'It was only when we were adults that Paul had anything to say to me about John. He had no positive memories of their relationship'. Gillespie, 'Responses to questions raised by J. Bourke in relation to the Gillespie family'. Paul Gillespie died in 2010.

<sup>46</sup> Hendrie, 'Having a husband (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'; and, Herbert, 'Having a brother (Michael Herbert) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'.

<sup>47</sup> Herbert, 'Having a brother (Michael Herbert) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'. Furthermore, Shane Herbert recollected, 'the situation with the mother would have been, they [other members of the family] would have been most conscious about not upsetting her any further'. Gillson's son, Robert provided a further example of this type of *Non-engagement*. Robert heard of the details of the loss of his biological father around 1977, at the age of approximately 12 years. Similarly, Gillespie's daughter was acquainted with the details regarding her father around 1980, at '10 to 12' years of age.

Family members and comrades of the Forgotten Six often employed *Acceptance* when they received new information supporting a conclusive outcome. For example, Francis Gillespie, John Gillespie's father, on receiving the initial advice regarding his son quickly *accepted* he was dead.<sup>48</sup>

Family members and comrades sometimes employed *Acceptance* when they felt resolution of their emotional conflicts was unlikely. Some initially hoped for the recovery of the men's remains; however, with no signs of that happening *acceptance* of the inevitable replaced this sense of hope. Robert Gillson Jr, speaking about the period before 2000 recalled, 'I thought there was absolutely no hope in ever recovering his body, nor would I have thought that there ever would be an opportunity for that to happen'.<sup>49</sup>

*Acceptance* was virtually an imperative in some situations, particularly as individuals entered a critical life-cycle phase. For example, in late 2002 Joan Herbert viewed the ceremony associated with the dedication of the gates at Michael Herbert's old school as the funeral her son never had, demonstrating *Acceptance* as her death day approached.<sup>50</sup>

*Acceptance* was further evident with the passage of time and the associated lessening of the emotional effects of loss and non-recovery. By the mid-1980s, most adopted *Acceptance* but some adopted it much earlier. Although *Activism* flourished during the investigation and recovery phase (2005–09), family members and comrades reverted to *Acceptance* after the men's recovery, repatriation and commemoration. The temptation exists to consider the strategy of *Acceptance* as employed in this latter stage as something different—perhaps *Final Acceptance*. However, although this may be a reasonable proposition, categorically ascribing such finality in all cases might be presumptuous. Who knows what the family members and comrades of the Forgotten Six might think or feel about the men's loss and delayed recovery in the future? *Acceptance* remains as the acceptance of the status quo, because the strategy may need to be invoked at sometime in the future.

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<sup>48</sup> Gillespie, 'Burying the ghosts of "Nam"'. Because the authorities initially reported John Gillespie clearly as KIA, Francis Gillespie had no reason to believe otherwise.

<sup>49</sup> Gillson Jr, 'Having a father (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

<sup>50</sup> Denny, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Michael Herbert)'.



Different strategies sometimes occurred concurrently. *Acceptance* occasionally operated alongside *Non-engagement*. For example, most members of Gillespie's family accepted he was dead and nobody was about to recover his remains. Therefore, family members were *Non-engaged* and *Accepting*. While employing *Substitution* by entering into new relationships soon after Army reported their husbands as dead, Lorraine Easton and Carmel Hendrie *accepted* the status quo. Most likely, there would be no further resolution of their related disrupted emotional states. Hence, *Acceptance* with *Substitution* enabled the widows to move on with their respective lives. Surprisingly, *Acceptance* occasionally operated alongside *Activism*. For example, after 2006, while employing *Activism*, some family members awaited the outcomes of the OAH and ADF investigations but were prepared to accept the non-recovery of identifiable remains. Shane Herbert reflected, 'I really had surrendered my expectation and was quite at peace with whatever took place'.<sup>51</sup> Robert Gillson Jr and Christine Gillespie, John Gillespie's sister expressed similar sentiments.<sup>52</sup>

Outcomes of a strategy sometimes altered the prevailing *affective/experiential* state, as illustrated by the actions of the Gillespie family. In August 2006, a report in the *West Australian* (Perth) that people were visiting the Gillespie crash site dramatically disturbed the Gillespie family, who at that time were in a state of *Resignation*.<sup>53</sup> The family adopted the strategy of *Activism* and aggressively requested an official investigation of their case, which demonstrated the use of *Optimism*.

*Activism* potentially influenced the attitudes of external entities, provided they were sensitive to the needs of family members and comrades. For example, the *Activism* of Gillespie's family in 2006 directly triggered the Government's offer of assistance.<sup>54</sup> However, the authorities were not listening in 2004 and 2005 when some members of the Parker and Gillson families, and some of the men's comrades lodged two petitions requesting assistance.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Herbert, 'Having a brother (Michael Herbert) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'.

<sup>52</sup> Gillson Jr, 'Having a father (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'; and, Gillespie, 'Having a brother (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>53</sup> Pennells, 'Does Vietnam jungle hold secret of missing digger?'.

<sup>54</sup> Gillespie, Hendrie and Pike, 'John Gillespie MIA'.

<sup>55</sup> Ley, 'Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives, 1 March: Vietnam—Personnel Missing-in-Action'; and, Fifield, 'Parliamentary Debates, Senate, 11 October: Vietnam—Personnel Missing-in-Action'.

Family members and comrades adopted similar strategies because their needs and wants possessed a degree of congruence. In general, *Substitution*, *Non-engagement* and *Acceptance* progressively replaced the initial and limited burst of *Activism*. Before 2002, *Acceptance* became the dominant strategy and re-emerged after a short burst of *Activism* during 2005 to 2009. Nevertheless, the individual patterns of strategies adopted were unique.

Although the strategies of family members and comrades were not always productive, they helped family members in particular to feel they were doing their best to manage their respective issues. At a more fundamental level, these strategies enabled individuals to get on with their everyday lives.

A range of common factors engendered *affective/experiential* states and influenced the strategy selections of family members and comrades. Hence, a correlation existed between states-of-mind and strategies. Table 7–1 summarises these relationships.

**Table 7–1: Relationships between Strategies and Affective/Experiential States**

STRATEGIES	AFFECTIVE/EXPERIENTIAL STATES			
	<i>Optimism</i>	<i>Helplessness</i>	<i>Despair</i>	<i>Resignation</i>
Activism	YES			
Substitution		YES	YES	YES
Non-engagement	YES	YES	YES	YES
Acceptance	YES		YES	YES

*Activism* only emerged in association with the primary state of *Optimism*, or with the hybrid state of *Optimism/Resignation*. For example, shortly after their sons went missing, while in a state of *Optimism* William Fisher and John Herbert actively pursued further details from the RAAF.

Substitution was sometimes associated with *Helplessness*, *Despair* and *Resignation*. For example, while in a state of *Helplessness/Despair*, Lorraine Easton and Carmel Hendrie substituted their relationships with their (presumed) deceased husbands with new associations. Within 12 months or less of their husbands' deaths, Easton and Hendrie employed *Substitution* when they volitionally entered into these

new relationships.<sup>56</sup> In 1984, John Herbert employed *Substitution*. At that moment-in-time, he was most likely in a state of *Resignation*.

*Non-engagement* appeared in all states. For example, Pat Woodland often employed *Non-engagement* while in a state of *Optimism* or *Optimism/Resignation*. Soon after the reported loss of their kin, Woodland and Easton, with their failed attempts to elicit support from the authorities experienced *Helplessness* and thereafter adopted the strategy of *Non-engagement*. Immediately after her husband's death, while in *Despair* Hendrie employed *Non-engagement* and *Substitution*. Much later, in 2002, while in *Resignation*, she continued to be *non-engaged* in refusing to reopen her husband's case.<sup>57</sup> In addition, the Herbert family moved to *Resignation* by 2002, and similarly were *non-engaged* by not wanting to have their case investigated by OAH.<sup>58</sup>

*Acceptance* appeared in the states of *Optimism*, *Despair* and *Resignation* but did not appear in the state of *Helplessness*, simply because in that state the relevant parties still hoped external assistance might be forthcoming. Robert Gillson Jr, Shane Herbert and Christine Gillespie adopted *Acceptance* within a state of *Optimism* as they awaited the outcomes of the investigation of their cases during 2007 to 2009.<sup>59</sup> Shortly after their husbands' deaths, while in a state of *Despair* Easton and Hendrie *accepted* nobody was about to resolve their issues. *Acceptance* was the predominant strategy during *Resignation*. For example, well before 2000 Robert Gillson Jr felt there was little chance of anyone recovering his father's remains and, in *Resignation* accepted the extant state-of-affairs.

Along with the raw facts and their interpretation, imagination and relevant memories fed day-to-day realities and often generated high levels of emotion. Nonetheless, family members and comrades were usually logical and rational in their

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<sup>56</sup> Carmel Hendrie recalled 'I probably went off the rails a bit. I met a nice gentleman called Ron Hendrie, about four months: it was the twenty-first of June—April, May, June—three months. Michael, John's brother introduced me and we clicked it off a fair bit'. Hendrie, 'Having a husband (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>57</sup> Hendrie, 'Family aspirations regarding the investigation of the case John Gillespie'.

<sup>58</sup> Hendrie transitioned to the stage of *Optimism* in 2006 and adopted an *activist* strategy. The Herbert family followed Hendrie's lead in 2008.

<sup>59</sup> Gillson Jr, 'Having a father (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'; Herbert, 'Having a brother (Michael Herbert) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'; and, Gillespie, 'Having a brother (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'. Gillson, Herbert and Gillespie were prepared to accept that the searchers might not recover any identifiable remains.

fight against their emotional conflicts. However, in a few instances the lack of information distorted perceptions and engendered seemingly irrational behaviour.

By way of summary, the following re-visits the main points regarding the strategies used by the family members and comrades. Assessments of the likelihood of others providing assistance and evaluations of their personal efforts enabled family members and comrades to identify potentially useful strategies including *Activism*, *Substitution*, *Non-engagement* and *Acceptance*.

Depending on the perceptions of reality held by family members and comrades, strategies changed over time and sometimes operated concurrently. Because the needs and wants of family members and comrades possessed a degree of congruence, various individuals sometimes adopted the same strategy; however, the patterns of strategy selection were nonetheless unique. Nevertheless, there was a clear progression from the strategies of *Activism*, *Substitution* and *Non-engagement* to *Acceptance*.

Because the factors that engendered the *affective/experiential* states also encouraged the selection of strategies, there were relationships between particular states-of-mind and certain strategies. In addition, the implementation of strategies sometimes moved family members and comrades into fresh *experiential* states.

Although not necessarily effective, enactment of the various strategies helped family members and comrades to feel they were doing their best and enabled them to get on with their lives. The members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades generally behaved logically and rationally as they dealt with their emotions and thoughts.

## **WORKING TOWARDS CLOSURE**

This study conceives 'closure' as a state of mind, an outcome of practical and cognitive actions reflecting the extent to which family members and comrades of the Forgotten Six came to terms with the men's loss and non-recovery. Closure was not restricted to the men's death and the attendant grief, but for some of the men's comrades, closure related to their involvement in the loss event and the failure to recover the men or their remains during or in the years following the War. The contentious and unresolved issues differed between individuals and their foci changed over time.

Looking back at the experiences and behaviours of the members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades between 1965 and 2011, illuminates the levels of closure that these individuals progressively achieved. The progression through the various *affective/experiential* states, terminating in *Resignation*, suggests closure

emerged progressively. *Acceptance*, in the state of *Resignation*, further reinforced this progressive nature of closure.

Concurrent with their efforts to achieve the best possible levels of closure, family members and comrades needed to move on with their unique and individual lives. The emotional conflicts associated with the unresolved issues around the Forgotten Six, albeit extremely vexatious, were but one component among the ongoing concerns in the everyday lives of the members of the men's families and their comrades.

Closure as an emotional state comprised of five levels, *Initial Closure*, *Stalled Closure*, *Forced Closure*, *Lapsed Time Closure* and *Enhanced Closure*. *Initial Closure* appeared soon after the reported loss of some of the Forgotten Six; *Forced Closure* and *Lapsed Time Closure* occasionally emerged before recovery of the men's remains while *Enhanced Closure* appeared after the men's repatriations and funerals. In contrast and subject to context, *Stalled Closure* potentially emerged at any time.

In general, the strength of the emotional bonds with members of the Forgotten Six coupled with the passage of time and the associated abandonment of hope influenced these levels of closure. Furthermore, closure occurred between 1965 and 2011, which was a period of significant change in Australia's cultural, social and political environment and these changes affected attitudes toward death and bereavement.

Closure did not emerge spontaneously. It resulted from practical actions and cognitive processes often encased in high levels of emotionality. Individuals assessed the extent to which they, or others, redressed their conflicts and despite the concomitant ambiguity progressively accepted the best possible level of closure available under the circumstances. The closure attained by one individual need not be *complete*: it simply needed to be *accepted* as sufficient. However, others could still question such assessments and new information could erode an extant level of closure.

Individuals had the option of questioning whether they might move to a more satisfactory level of closure but this required a significant investment of emotional energy with no guarantee of any improvement. Although family members and comrades achieved various levels of closure before the men's recovery, some felt these levels were suboptimal, as indicated by the families agreeing to or requesting an investigation of their cases during 2002 to 2008. After the men's recovery and return to Australia, family members and comrades continued to work toward closure.

A number of processes provided a rational basis for closure. First, individuals needed to accept death and in some instances needed to understand, as best they could, the forensics surrounding the death event. Second, optimum closure came through the recovery of identifiable remains and the conduct of funerals that served as a rite-of-passage to the Forgotten Six. Third, most importantly, to achieve a substantive level of closure, family members and comrades needed to engineer comfortable social spaces for the dead. These spaces engendered on-going connections with the loved one or comrade and facilitated remembrance and commemoration.

The processes associated with *Initial*, *Forced*, *Lapsed Time* and *Enhanced Closure* carried the connotation of acceptance. For example, Fiona Pike, Gillespie's daughter acknowledged she had not really achieved closure over the years, compared to that experienced on the recovery of her father's remains, but rather she reached a stage of 'acceptance at what had happened and we were OK [with] where Dad was at that time'.<sup>60</sup>

The inability to develop a comfortable social space was often an impediment to achieving sustainable closure. Pike described these impediments and the emotionality surrounding the family's efforts to achieve closure:

It ... [the loss of my father] ... kept on coming up in the media every couple of years. It just never ever went away. ... Mum and I would be going 'here we go again'. It was frustration. It was anger. It was going through the ... emotions of he's not here.<sup>61</sup>

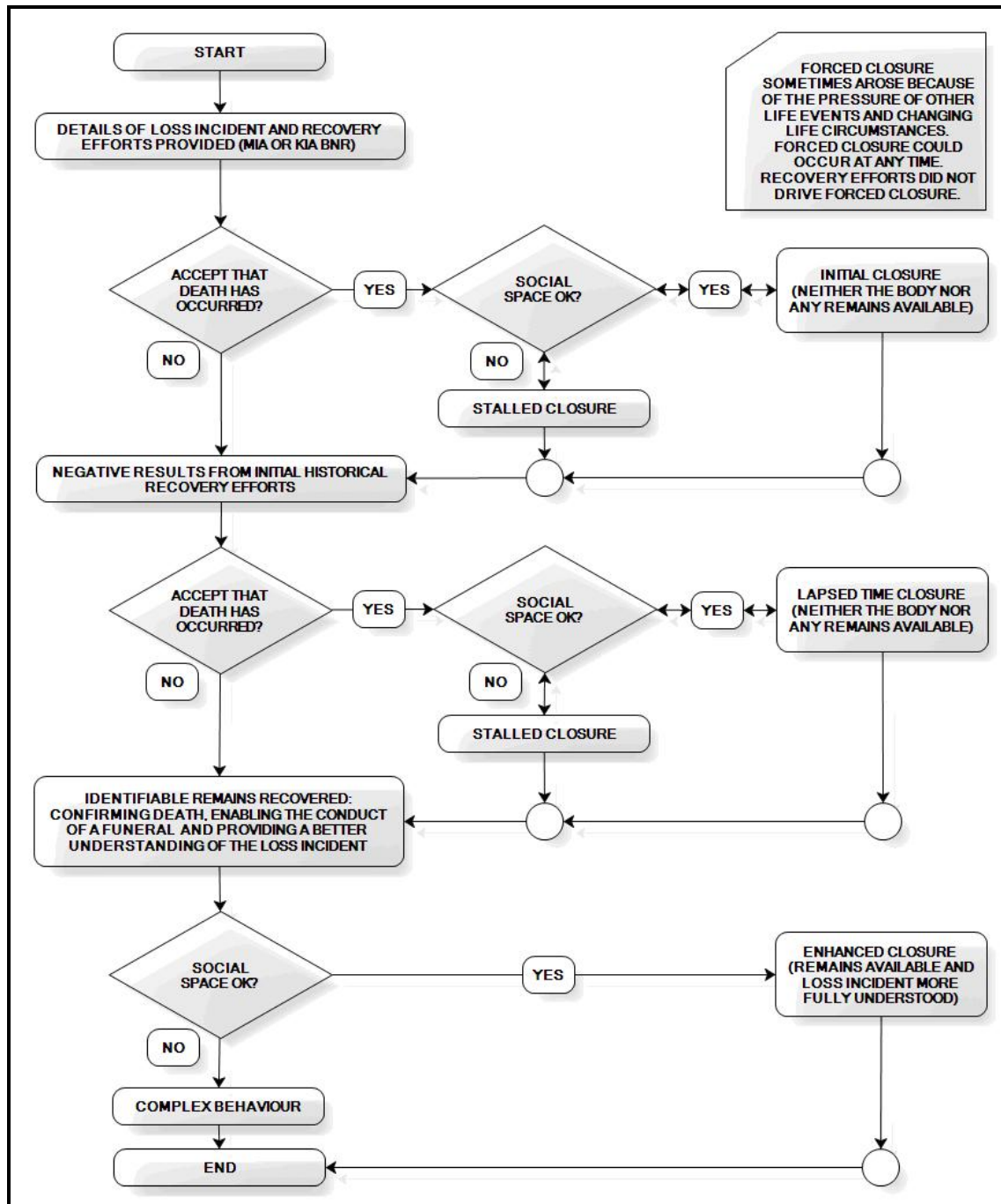
Family members and comrades required reliable inputs to conceptualise their social spaces effectively. These inputs depended largely, but not exclusively, on the efficacy of investigative and recovery efforts, over which family members and comrades had little or no control. These activities included combat and post-combat operations, official investigations conducted during the War, the Government Mission of 1984 and the recovery efforts from 2007 to 2009. Information from these endeavours assisted in the creation of comfortable social spaces and effectively provided stepping-stones on the pathway to closure. Figure 7–2 illustrates the emergence of the various types of closure and recovery efforts in their temporal sequence. *Forced Closure* was not temporarily tied to investigative and recovery efforts but was still dependent upon information from such efforts.

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<sup>60</sup> Pike, 'Having a father (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

Figure 7-2: Levels of Closure Related to Recovery Efforts



*Initial Closure* emerged for some soon after the authorities reported the men's loss. Family members and comrades predicated *Initial Closure* on the casualty classifications that provided summaries of the loss incidents and any associated recovery efforts. *Initial Closure* came relatively quickly when the casualty classification was KIA (BNR) as opposed to MIA, because death was more readily accepted. This state of closure was an immediate reaction to the loss based upon the interpretation of available information. For example, Francis Gillespie, on receiving official notification, accepted his son was dead. Others in Gillespie's birth family progressively followed suit. Lorraine Easton and Carmel Hendrie accepted their husbands were dead simply

because Army reported the men as KIA (BNR). It is possible those who accepted *Initial Closure* wanted to get on with their lives by defusing their contentious issues. With some difficulty, Easton and Hendrie progressively engineered their former husbands' social spaces, which became at least tolerable, although Easton had trouble in the short-term. Comfortable social spaces were not always easy to create.<sup>62</sup>

When the casualty classification was MIA, family members in particular did not readily accept death and consequently did not achieve *Initial Closure*. However, some comrades, based on their knowledge of the loss events accepted death and with a degree of celerity moved to *Initial Closure*.

*Initial Closure* was flimsy. With no body to confirm death or to enable the conduct of a funeral and with limited information on how the men died, many were unable to generate comfortable social spaces. Furthermore, the possibility of new information emerging continually threatened *Initial Closure*.

Before the men's recovery and without definitive evidence regarding the circumstances of their death, the process of working toward closure occasionally stalled. *Stalled Closure* could emerge at any time. In some instances, family members and comrades vacillated between *Stalled Closure* and a substantive position.

The inability to engineer a comfortable social space was the main reason for closure stalling. Unanswered questions related to the circumstances of the death often impeded the creation of comfortable spaces, and family members and comrades developed their social spaces with varying degrees of efficacy.<sup>63</sup> For example, because of the absence of her brother's body or his remains, Pat Woodland was unable to accept her brother was dead until 2007. This non-acceptance compromised the comfort of Woodland's social space and closure stalled.

Another reason for the abandonment of an extant level of closure and entering *Stalled Closure* was the emergence of contradictory or disconcerting information. Most members of Gillespie's birth family and his widow entered into *Initial Closure* soon after

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<sup>62</sup> Initially the possibility that the Vietnamese might have captured her husband flashed through Easton's mind. Easton, 'Having a husband (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'. Similarly, over the years Robert Gillson Snr had similar troubling thoughts regarding his brother being a POW. Gillson Snr, 'Having a brother (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'.

<sup>63</sup> Thoughts as to how the men died often permeated social spaces. Over lunch in early 2007, Christine Gillespie asked some pointed questions regarding how her brother may have died. Did he have a weapon with him? Would one of the other men have left him a weapon? These types of troubling questions lurked in the social spaces.



Gillespie's death and over the next 35 years, family members were able to create comfortable social spaces for Gillespie. For example, Christine Gillespie envisioned her brother's 'ashes were in a beautiful place under a tree in this jungle'.<sup>64</sup> However, in August 2006 the *West Australian* (Perth) revealed people were visiting the Gillespie crash site.<sup>65</sup> Carmel Hendrie reacted, 'he'd been at peace for so long over there [and] people started walking all over him'.<sup>66</sup> The report disrupted John Gillespie's social space as created by his widow and his sister, leading to *Stalled Closure*.

On occasions, changing life-circumstances and/or the pressure of other life events not directly related to the Forgotten Six forced a degree of finality engendering *Forced Closure*. *Forced Closure* often emerged late in the life cycles of family members and comrades. The reality of impending death sometimes engendered *Forced Closure*. Hence, some family members, particularly the men's parents, with an increasing awareness of their own mortality and their emotional closeness to the Forgotten Six, embraced *Forced Closure*. They needed some sort of expedient action to redress their emotional state and personal conflict. For example, while on her deathbed Joan Herbert called on her religious beliefs and invoked the notion of closure in the afterlife.

The desire or need to get on with life sometimes encouraged *Forced Closure*. For example, John Herbert 'had to go ahead' with his job as a salesperson and 'had to get these things [the loss of his son] out of ... [his] mind'.<sup>67</sup> Herbert forced closure in order to get on with the everyday practicality of earning a living.

*Forced Closure* was not necessarily durable because the absence of a body and the possibility of new information emerging made the creation of a robust social space difficult.

With the non-availability of the men's remains, the progression of time and changes in the life situations of family members and comrades, *Lapsed Time Closure* emerged. *Forced Closure* and *Lapsed Time Closure* are similar because both are generally associated with the passage of time. The main difference between them is *Lapsed Time Closure* is volitional.

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<sup>64</sup> Gillespie, 'Having a brother (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>65</sup> Pennells, 'Does Vietnam jungle hold secret of missing digger?'.

<sup>66</sup> Hendrie, 'Having a husband (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

<sup>67</sup> H. Piper, 'MIA: Missing-in-Action', John Herbert, 23 min.

As the years rolled by there was little hope anyone would recover the men or their remains. The general view was the circumstances surrounding the Forgotten Six were optimally finalised. Although some initially held a forlorn hope the men were still alive, by the late 1980s most consciously accepted the men were dead. Progressively family members and comrades accepted *Lapsed Time Closure*. For example, in 1984 Syd Carver, Robert Carver's father, mused, 'Mum [Syd Carver's wife] and I live alone here and we often spend the days wondering what ever happened to Rob'.<sup>68</sup>

In 2002, only Joan and John Herbert, aged 82 and 79 years respectively, remained as surviving parents of the Forgotten Six. The ages of the men's siblings ranged from 43 to 68 years. The three widows were between 55 and 60 years, while the men's comrades were in their 50s and 60s. More than 30 years had passed since the reported loss of the men. Although there were some exceptions, most family members and comrades lived relatively stable lives with an absence of any pressing life events. Under these circumstances, *Lapsed Time Closure* flourished.

*Lapsed Time Closure* is vulnerable, but when buttressed by logic and common sense it is more durable than *Initial* or *Forced Closure*. However, there were no bodies to confirm death or to allow the conduct of a funeral and family members in particular still had limited information with which to generate comfortable social spaces for the Forgotten Six. Ambiguity persisted.

By 2000, family members and comrades were pragmatic in their belief that there was no reason to question the levels of closure they attained and moved on with their lives as best they could. Nevertheless, from time-to-time various factors emerged to disrupt these extant levels of closure. For example, the suggestion OAH might investigate the cases caused consternation and was emotionally disruptive, at least within the Gillespie, Herbert and Fisher families. Nonetheless, over time the families eventually acquiesced to, or requested investigation of their cases. The families risked their previous levels of closure in the hope of attaining an improved level and the subsequent recovery of identifiable remains led to *Enhanced Closure*. The families conducted funerals, affording the rite-of-passage to the men and family members and comrades re-engineered relatively comfortable social spaces for each of the Forgotten Six. The positive responses and cathartic display of emotions during the men's repatriations and funerals demonstrated the desirability of *Enhanced Closure*.

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<sup>68</sup> Haran, "'Vital' to parents'.

*Enhanced Closure* was relatively durable although the new social spaces remained vulnerable.<sup>69</sup>

The creation of a positive social space was and is critical in achieving sustainable closure. The creation of durable social spaces relies on the provision of reliable information. Knowing how the men died was important to many. For example, Ann Cowdroy in 2008 recalled, 'The knowledge that he died where he fell and did not endure further suffering has given us all a sense of peace'.<sup>70</sup> For comrades who questioned their performance during the loss incident, understanding the associated forensics helped them to re-evaluate their roles in the death events. These improved understandings facilitated the creation of more comfortable social spaces and sustained *Enhanced Closure*. In addition, for some comrades, their participation in the investigations, particularly investigative activities in Vietnam and participation in the repatriation ceremonies provided opportunities for further healing regarding their experiences during the War. These recovery-related experiences assisted in developing comfortable social spaces around the Forgotten Six.

Levels of closure were associated with various *affective/experiential* states. *Initial Closure* emerged in *Resignation*, perhaps initially tinged with *Helplessness* and *Despair*. *Lapsed Time Closure* and *Forced Closure* also generally appeared in *Resignation*. *Enhanced Closure* appeared within *Optimism*. The attainment of *Enhanced Closure* moved individuals toward *Resignation*, but with a degree of contentment. *Stalled Closure* potentially emerged in any experiential state. Hence, in all cases except *Stalled Closure*, closure emerged in or was associated with *Resignation*, wherein *Acceptance* was the predominant strategy.

Closure did not completely eliminate the emotional conflict associated with the deaths of the Forgotten Six. Even in the state of *Enhanced Closure*, the maintenance of social spaces and continuing bonds, particularly by family members, kept memories alive and grief remained embedded. With the men's recovery, repatriation and commemoration, healing and *Enhanced Closure* were palpable within the ranks of the comrades. However, for a few comrades, memories remained accessible and even *Enhanced Closure* did not eliminate all questions concerning their performance on the

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<sup>69</sup> For example, in Apr. 2013, Carmel Hendrie called for 'an ANZAC Day' chat and casually mentioned that one of her relatives, while they were touring in Vietnam received some further information regarding the case of John Gillespie.

<sup>70</sup> Anon., 'Vale, dear friend', Issue 39, p. 5.

battlefield. Hence, there was nothing necessarily *final* or *absolute* about closure. Closure is an on-going process, not a terminal state. There is no protection against new information disrupting extant levels of closure.

Comprehensive investigation of unresolved cases by a competent agency may improve levels of closure. For example, while awaiting the results of the recovery efforts (2007–09), some family members acknowledged and prepared for the possibility of non-recovery of identifiable remains.<sup>71</sup> These individuals *may* have achieved a level of closure approaching *Enhanced Closure* even if recovery efforts failed.

By way of summary, the types of closure available to family members and comrades of the Forgotten Six consisted of *Initial Closure*, *Stalled Closure*, *Forced Closure*, *Lapsed Time Closure* and *Enhanced Closure*. *Initial Closure*, *Lapsed Time Closure* and *Forced Closure* generally appeared in the *affective/experiential* state of *Resignation*. *Stalled Closure* emerged in any experiential state. *Enhanced Closure* emerged in the state of *Optimism*. On attaining *Enhanced Closure*, individuals moved to a refreshed state of *Resignation*, employing the strategy of *Acceptance*.

Closure depended largely on the progression of time and the changing life situations of family members and comrades, but all levels of closure were information-driven and cognitive processes underpinned the closure process. Ultimately, the efficacy of investigative and recovery efforts redressed ambiguity and propelled closure. Comprehensive investigation of unresolved cases by a competent agency may improve levels of closure even without the recovery of identifiable remains.

Each level of closure possessed varying degrees of fragility, primarily because of the possible emergence of new and sometimes spurious information and the impact of such information on the creation of social spaces. Within moments of change, there was the strong drive to create a stable and comfortable social space to support closure. *Enhanced Closure*, in contrast to other forms is not as susceptible to such disruptions.

## **THEORISING CLOSURE**

Based on the understandings of the experiences and behaviours of the members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades, there is a substantive theory

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<sup>71</sup> Gillson Jr, 'Having a father (Peter Gillson) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 42 years'; Herbert, 'Having a brother (Michael Herbert) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'; and, Gillespie, 'Having a brother (John Gillespie) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 36 years'.

regarding closure. This theory relates to closure around contentious issues arising from traumatic events during wartime and the non-recovery, or delayed recovery of the dead. High levels of ambiguity characterise these events. Survivors may experience ambiguous loss where they enjoyed close bonds with a loved one or comrade who died, and whose body was not recovered. This ambiguous loss may give rise to unresolved grief, around which family members and comrades may seek closure. For survivors directly involved in a traumatic event, uncompleted event-related tasks encased in high levels of ambiguity might call for closure. Self-perceived suboptimal performance during the loss incident and feelings of culpability may also demand closure. Guilt often accompanies these performance-related issues.

This discussion defines closure as an affective state that arises when individuals employ cognitive and/or practical measures, individually or in conjunction with others to resolve a contentious issue. Such measures need not necessarily result in the contentious issue's finalisation; however, with the passage of time and changing conditions various levels of closure progressively emerge. Hence, closure manifests in degrees and is not necessarily *absolute*. Depending on the contemporaneous circumstances, individual characteristics and the passage of time, family members and comrades may achieve various levels of closure, *Initial Closure*, *Forced Closure*, *Lapsed Time Closure*, *Stalled Closure* and *Enhanced Closure*.

*Initial Closure* may manifest soon after the traumatic event in cases where family members and comrades accept, at least provisionally and based on the perception of reliable information, that the loved-one or comrade is dead. The pressure of competing life events or changing stages in a person's life cycle may result in *Forced Closure*. The passage of time and the lack of fresh details regarding the traumatic event and/or the lost member may engender *Lapsed Time Closure*. *Stalled Closure* may appear at any time because of disruptions to the social space. *Enhanced Closure* may emerge on the recovery of remains, accompanied by a better understanding of the loss event, including the part played by those who in some way felt responsible for the loss or who may have felt their performance during the loss event was suboptimal. The conduct of funerals and appropriate commemoration of the deceased contribute to *Enhanced Closure*. *Enhanced Closure* may also emerge after investigation by an authority or agency perceived to be competent in such matters, even if identifiable remains are not recovered.

Closure is not an emotion in its own right. Closure emerges within various the *affective/experiential* states experienced through ambiguous loss and unresolved grief, including *Optimism*, *Helplessness*, *Despair* and *Resignation*. Relevant emotions,

moods and emotional episodes are associated with these *states*, and therefore the various levels of closure reflect these emotions, moods and emotional episodes. A similar situation exists for those seeking closure around uncompleted tasks, deriving from involvement in traumatic events.

Information and cognitive processes drive closure. The provision of reliable information, usually by persons other than family members and comrades may progressively decrease the ambiguity surrounding contentious issues and encourage closure.

In achieving closure, family members and comrades create social spaces that engender on-going connections with the missing and facilitate remembrance and commemoration. Survivors who are concerned with their actions during the loss incident use the social spaces to maintain their relationship with the deceased and to interpret and review their battlefield performances.

### ***ADDING TO THE BODY OF KNOWLEDGE***

This section compares the overall findings of this study to relevant extant theories and observations. This discussion does not include the findings related to the management of MIA matters by the authorities during the second half of the twentieth century. That discussion will take place elsewhere. The comparisons made below enable identification of findings that are congruent with existing knowledge, those entirely or partly at odds with extant understandings and findings that potentially add to the body of knowledge.

Individual characteristics of family members, particularly the extent of pre-loss bonding with the missing or deceased person, the family's structure and its societal positioning influenced the grieving process within the families. Family systems theory validates findings regarding these effects. At least two participants noted there was an initial reluctance by male family members to discuss the men's loss and thereby avoid openly expressing their grief.<sup>72</sup> However, between 2007 and 2009 during the repatriation and the funerals of the Forgotten Six, men and women displayed their grief openly. Such behaviours are consistent with the concomitant culture within Australia. Employing their religious beliefs to deal with loss and grief was not a widely used

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<sup>72</sup> This reluctance of male family members to discuss the losses could indicate they attained a more substantial level of closure than females, especially considering memory theory suggests males generally considered memories more closed than did females. However, this research did not test the relative levels of closure between the sexes.

strategy among the family members and comrades of the Forgotten Six. Those who called on their religious beliefs, mostly family members, generally benefited but religion provided only limited solace to the men's comrades. This situation is consonant with the increasing secularisation of Australian society during the twentieth century.

This study identified a hierarchy of grief within the families of the Forgotten Six. The central mourning figure, the living person perceived to be most affected by the loss, presided over this hierarchy. Extant theories regarding the intensity of grief occasioned by the loss of a child, a spouse or a sibling confirmed the positions adopted by individuals within this hierarchy. Hence, the hierarchy of grief identified within these families is not a new concept per se. Nevertheless, earlier discussions illustrated the desirability of family members working within their hierarchy to maintain family harmony.

Drawing on explanations of the types of grief identified by others, the following refines the descriptions of the grieving experiences of members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades. First, the mortal remains of the Forgotten Six were not available until 2007 (Parker, Gillson and Gillespie), 2008 (Fisher) and 2009 (Herbert and Carver)—36 years or more after their reported loss. The high levels of ambiguity surrounding the losses inhibited the grieving process of family members and some comrades. Before the men's recovery, family members and some comrades experienced *unresolved* grief.<sup>73</sup> In addition, particularly for family members, *anticipatory* grief appeared at least until death was accepted. This *unresolved* grief was not necessarily *frozen* grief because some family members and comrades progressively attained substantive levels of closure. Second, *normal* grief emerged with the recovery of the men's remains and family members, and the community generally were able to progress their grief in a manner similar to that envisaged by most extant theories relating to validated deaths.

The assessments of family members and comrades of their progress toward resolving their contentious issues potentially generated four *affective/experiential* states-of-mind: *Optimism*, *Helplessness*, *Despair* and *Resignation*. These states reflected the social realities perceived by family members and comrades. Not all individuals experienced all four states and certainly not in any pre-ordained sequence. Most contemporary theories of bereavement and grief present the experiences of the

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<sup>73</sup> Symptoms of *complicated* grief appeared in some cases but consideration of such manifestations is outside the scope of this study.

bereaved, their emotions and/or their actions/interactions in terms of stages or phases. Other theories are task oriented and prescriptive. However, the *affective/experiential* states identified in this study are descriptive and operate at a higher level of abstraction than the stages, phases or tasks used by others. It is therefore difficult to make direct comparisons between the states identified herein and the stages/phases/tasks postulated by others. However, the non-linear progression of grief through these states is generally consistent with the thinking behind contemporary theories of grief. Nevertheless, the identification of these *affective/experiential* states adds to our knowledge.

Family members and comrades of the Forgotten Six reacted to prevailing circumstances and formulated strategies to manage their contentious issues. Strategies included *Activism*, *Substitution*, *Non-engagement* and *Acceptance*. There was a clear progression from *Activism* to *Acceptance*. The literature is replete with examples of strategies individuals employed to deal with bereavement and grief, and such accounts often supported the strategies identified in the stories embedded in this study. For example, the bereaved often and initially searched for details of the loss incident, thereby demonstrating *Activism*. *Non-engagement* sometimes appeared early in the grieving process and reflected *denial*, widely acknowledged by other researchers. *Substitution* was not new. For example, there are many reported instances of *Substitution* where bereaved persons engaged in other activities to provide a distraction from their loss. Indeed, in this study *Substitution* appeared more generally with the notion of relinquishing bonds with the deceased and forming new relationships, as typified by the widows of Gillson and Gillespie. Similarly, at various stages the bereaved used *Acceptance*—acceptance of the status quo, which is the outcome implied by most predominant theories of grief. Hence, the strategies employed by individuals to deal with their issues, especially grief, generally reflected the strategies observed by others. However, the identification of four generalised strategies incorporating observed behaviours provides a schema for examining such behaviours.

Places, artefacts and events became significant to the family members and comrades as they dealt with the men's loss and non-recovery for three decades or more, and their eventual recovery. Most family members and the comrades wanted to know the place and circumstances of death. Some comrades knew of the general location of the incidents and possessed some understanding of the death events, but their information was often imprecise.



For some the loss location became a temporary focal point for their grief. These behaviours were consistent with observations from earlier wars. However, during the men's repatriation, the significance of the place of death paled and the coffins, allegedly containing the men's remains provided a new focus for grief, encouraging the final acceptance of death. This desire to confirm death by recovering the bodies, or parts thereof was reminiscent of the earlier behaviour of the bereaved from the Vietnam War who had the luxury of having the bodies present. Appreciation of how the foci of grief changed adds to, or perhaps confirms our understanding of the likely behaviours of individuals whose kin die overseas.

For family members and comrades of the Forgotten Six, funerals were a source of consolation, a phenomenon often reported elsewhere. The grave became the temporary focal point for emotions; however, the grave's importance progressively receded. Most bereaved did not ritualise cemetery visits. This decrease in the grave's importance is at odds with the position generally espoused by others. Nevertheless, except for the diminished importance of the grave, the significance of places, artefacts and events are congruent with existing knowledge.

Closure in an absolute sense does not always eventuate, instead there are various levels including *Initial Closure*, *Stalled Closure*, *Forced Closure*, *Lapsed Time Closure* and *Enhanced Closure*. For those who mourned the men's loss, the levels of closure experienced were outcomes of their grieving processes. In the case of some of the comrades of the Forgotten Six, their levels of closure related to an unfinished task, namely the failure to recover the men at the time of their loss, during the War and subsequently. Despite the difficulty in precisely defining closure, the following compares the findings of this study with some of the extant theories and observations about grief and closure.

*Initial Closure* sometimes emerged quickly when the casualty was KIA (BNR) as opposed to MIA, because in KIA cases the bereaved more readily accepted death. Kübler-Ross and Kessler identified such a stage of closure as an 'unrealistic wrap-up', immediately after the loss. They also identified further levels of closure as the bereaved gave perspective to the loss, thereby suggesting *closure* is progressive.

The casualty classification of MIA was ambiguous and the bereaved initially found it difficult to accept death. This resulted in *Stalled Closure*. The literature does not identify *Stalled Closure* per se. Some theorists suggest, with ambiguous loss and the lack of a definitive end to the grieving process, the bereaved can never achieve (final) closure with the only option being to 'learn to live with ambiguity and doubt'. Over the years, some family members and comrades maintained their bonds with the

missing but these bonds were not the primary factor inhibiting the grieving process, as the mainstream theories sometimes imply. Closure often stalled because of the inability of the bereaved to accept death—a precursor of most theories for effective resolution of grief.

*Forced Closure* sometimes emerged because the survivors needed and wanted to get on with their lives, reflecting a desire, and indeed an objective. In addition, in some instances the bereaved experienced *Forced Closure* late in their life cycles as they confronted their own mortality. The literature does not acknowledge *Forced Closure* per se.

With the progression of time and changes in their life situations and even with the absence of recovered remains, some family members and comrades experienced *Lapsed Time Closure*. Studies in memory theory suggest closure is more prevalent around memories for older events, and memories of unpleasant events are less porous to the experience of closure. Individuals consider emotionally laden memories as subjectively less closed, but much of the emotional detail associated with event memories progressively becomes non-accessible. Hence, with the passage of time, family members and comrades of the Forgotten Six potentially benefited from the progressive purging of emotional detail from memories associated with the men's loss and non-recovery, supporting the concepts of *Lapsed Time Closure* specifically, and *Forced Closure* to some degree.

The recovery of identifiable remains lead to *Enhanced Closure*. There was unequivocal acceptance of death and the grieving experiences of the bereaved became more akin to *normal* grief. Participants often indicated the men's recovery and commemoration was not necessarily the end of their grieving; rather, it was the end of a chapter, not the end of the book. Some theorists support this notion of closure not being *absolute*. Silverman and Klass claim there is no end to the grieving process and 'closure' is an incompatible notion, suggesting 'accommodation' as an alternative to 'recovery, closure, or resolution'. Such ideas fit well with the notion of progressive closure that is not necessarily final or absolute. Nevertheless, others maintain effective *grief work* concludes the grieving process, implying the delivery of (final) closure.

Some comrades experienced intense feelings of guilt. The inability to recover the men from the battlefield during and after the War caused closure to stall. Not only did these individuals face an unfinished task of considerable moment, recalling the event brought back unpleasant memories, ridden with guilt, for which there was no immediate recompense. With the passage of time, *Lapsed Time Closure* became available and the eventual recovery of the Forgotten Six was associated with

*Enhanced Closure*. Nevertheless, with some comrades *Enhanced Closure* was not absolute as remnants of guilt persisted.

Overall, the five levels of closure postulated herein add to the body of knowledge, with some extant theories supporting the notion that closure is progressive.

Most family members and comrades of the Forgotten Six wanted to maintain their bonds with the members of the Forgotten Six by remembering and commemorating them and, in some instances by communicating with them. Reports of such behaviours were not new or uncommon. However, in this study there was little to suggest such bonds were unhealthy, which is at odds with many earlier mainstream theories. Since the early 1990s, others acknowledged continuing bonds might play a useful role in the grieving process. Hence, my findings are partly at odds with some earlier theories, while possessing a degree of congruence with more recent research.

Achieving a substantive level of closure required the bereaved to engineer comfortable and durable social spaces for the dead. The bereaved required reliable inputs to form the foundation of their conceptualisations of these social spaces. Maintaining bonds with dead did not rely primarily on the grave as a focal point. Rather, the social space as a subjective reality provides the principal means through which the bereaved maintain their bonds with the dead, without the physical constraint of the grave. Nevertheless, the social space sometimes embraces the grave as a significant symbolic artefact. Although the creation of social spaces per se might be a new concept, researchers frequently acknowledged the activities used to create such spaces, such as remembering, commemorating and communicating with the dead.

In summary, the findings of this study as related in the story of the Forgotten Six add to our knowledge in two areas, the identification of the four *affective/experiential* states and the existence of five levels of closure. Furthermore, by incorporating relevant existing knowledge with the findings of this study, two new concepts emerge, the existence of a hierarchy of grief within families and the creation of social spaces to accommodate the dead. In contrast to generally held beliefs, the grave in itself diminished in importance as a focal point for grief. The maintenance of continuing bonds, albeit qualitatively unique is congruent with some recent research.

## **TRANSFERABILITY OF FINDINGS**

This study deals with how individuals manage contentious life issues arising from wartime loss, where high levels of ambiguity exist. This study considers cases where adult males go missing and focuses on family members and comrades of the six men lost during the Vietnam War. The study traverses the period from the time of the men's

loss (1965–71) until their recovery and commemoration (2007–11). Therefore, the study possesses a degree of recency and the study's findings might be transferrable to other contemporary situations involving issues such as ambiguous loss, unresolved grief and uncompleted tasks, where high levels of ambiguity exist.

Besides being directly relevant to living relatives and comrades connected to unresolved MIA cases from the Second World War and the Korean War, some of the current study's findings and observations might apply to two other groups of Australians. These groups consist of first, individuals associated with persons who go missing in Australia; and second, the relatives and friends of Australians killed overseas where the bodies of the deceased are not recoverable.

In Australia, individuals occasionally go *missing* for a variety of reasons. The majority of disappearances do not involve foul play but as of 2008, the annual trend was 700 persons remained untraceable after six months. Regardless, the disappearance of these individuals represents ambiguous loss and may engender unresolved grief and/or guilt because of perceived culpability for the disappearance.

Over the last decade or so, an increasing number of Australian civilians have alarmingly died overseas because of terrorist attacks, natural disasters and other accidents or incidents. The downing of Malaysian Airlines in a war zone in the Ukraine on 17 July 2014 with the killing of 38 Australian citizens or residents is a recent and relevant incident. In this instance, recovery operations involved searching for the dead in a contested area, reminiscent of initial problems faced by searchers in the recovery of missing service personnel in Vietnam.

Searchers and investigators must exercise due diligence to establish the cause of the disappearance or loss and the specifics of individual cases. Although some bereaved may not initially want excessive detail regarding their loved one's disappearance or death, they might decide otherwise later on. Therefore, the State has the responsibility to ensure as much information as possible is collected in anticipation of delayed requests. Nevertheless, in the long-run a small percentage of relatives might not require or expect investigators to recover their loved one's bodies, as demonstrated in the current study.

Certain limitations exist regarding transferability of the current study's findings, mainly because of latent cultural differences. The current study treated the experiences of Australian citizens, although two grew up in England and one in Indonesia. Approximately 85% of participants were Christians and of these over 60% were either religious or very religious. (Five were agnostics, atheists or held other convictions.) Although the experiences discussed herein manifested within prevailing cultures, which

are historically rooted, these experiences reflect basic human emotions and even if findings are not completely transferrable, we could expect a degree of resonance in some areas, predominant cultural and societal norms permitting.

In summary, individuals from the groups identified will potentially endure similar experiences to the subjects of this study and hence the current study's findings might reasonably be transferable to such groups.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This Chapter identifies the phenomenon at the heart of this study, *Managing Contentious Life Issues*. These issues derived from the loss of the Forgotten Six, their non-recovery and their eventual return to Australia (2007–09). During the period from 1965 to 2009, family members and comrades of the Forgotten Six dealt with their contentious issues within the dynamic cultural, social and political milieus that surrounded them.

Family members and comrades experienced four *affective/experiential* states: *Optimism, Helplessness, Despair* and *Resignation*. These states operated at a higher level of abstraction than the stages, phases and tasks of the mainstream theories around bereavement and grief. Essentially, the states reflected the long-term and more recent social realities perceived by the family members and some comrades of the Forgotten Six. Individuals used four generalised strategies to deal with the loss of the six men and their eventual recovery, *Activism, Substitution, Non-engagement* and *Acceptance*. The relationships between the *affective/experiential* states-of-mind traversed by the members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades and the strategies they employed revealed, quite understandably, a degree of reciprocity.

Family members and comrades experienced *anticipatory* grief and *unresolved* grief before the men's recovery and *normal* grief following the finding and recovery of remains. Through their grieving experiences, family members and some comrades sought closure specifically around the deaths of the Forgotten Six. For some of the comrades, particularly those closely involved in the loss incidents, there was little closure during the war and subsequently around their actions on the battlefield and their failure to recover the men. However, the possibility of closure emerged with the recovery of the men's remains. The ambiguity surrounding the loss events dissipated and most importantly, the recovery finalised a long over due task for some of the men's comrades.

Although particular life situations influenced closure to a considerable extent, it also depended largely on the efficacy of investigative and recovery efforts over which

family members and comrades exerted little or no control. These recovery efforts provided information needed to work toward closure, but the facts emerged slowly. However, the families' preparedness to allow the re-opening of their cases enabled the recovery of identifiable remains and encouraged closure.

Examination of the behaviours of the members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades revealed they experienced *closure* progressively. The levels of closure included *Initial Closure*, *Stalled Closure*, *Forced Closure*, *Lapsed Time Closure* and *Enhanced Closure*. The men's eventual recovery enabled *Enhanced Closure* and encouraged healing. Regardless of the various routes taken by family members and comrades on their journeys toward closure, *Enhanced Closure* was the preferred destination.

Creating a stable and comfortable social space is especially important due to the on-going connections between the living and the dead within these social spaces. Such connections are an essential part of the closure process. Individuals needed reliable information to create their social spaces and the recovery of the Forgotten Six assisted in this regard.

Understanding how family members and comrades of the Forgotten Six managed their respective issues over the years from 1965 to 2011 led to the articulation of a substantive theory regarding closure in contexts involving high levels of ambiguity. Specifically, this theory deals with closure around unresolved grief and uncompleted tasks.

Comparing the findings of this study with extant theories and observations indicates findings that add to the body of knowledge. Some findings, specifically those related to the *affective/experiential* states experienced by family members and comrades, and the levels of closure they experienced, provide fresh perspectives, adding knowledge to the field. The desire to maintain bonds with the dead is generally at odds with earlier mainstream theories, but confirms the findings of more recent research. The notion of the social space wherein the living maintain contact with the dead represents a new concept, although others have extensively documented the activities that take place in the social space. The hierarchy of grief, presided over by the central mourning figure within the families, is a novel concept but others researched and articulated the concepts that underpin such a hierarchy. However, the potentially deleterious effect of family members not acknowledging the hierarchy is a fresh observation. The significance of places, artefacts and events as determined in this study reflects the findings of others, except for the diminished importance of the grave as a focal point for grief.

In conclusion, the penultimate section of this chapter suggests some of the findings of this study might be transferable to similar populations. Such populations include the relatives and comrades connected to unresolved MIA cases from the Second World War and the Korean War; relatives and friends of persons who go missing in Australia; or to individuals associated with Australians killed overseas where the bodies of the deceased are not recoverable.

## CHAPTER 8: REACHING CONCLUSIONS

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter offers an overview of the study, reviews the study's findings and their potential transferability, identifies and discusses a number of matters arising and offers a brief assessment of the value of this work.

### **OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY**

This study essentially treats four topics.

First, it illuminates the behaviours of family members and comrades of six Australian service men, the Forgotten Six. These men became casualties during the Vietnam War and the authorities classified them as MIA or KIA (BNR). It was 36 years or more from the time these men were lost until searchers recovered their remains and brought them home (2007–09). The family members and comrades of the Forgotten Six experienced significant unresolved grief until the men were recovered and it was only then that they experienced what was more akin to normal grief.

Second, the story reveals how the men's comrades dealt with the uncompleted tasks around the non-recovery of the men during and after the War. For some of the men's comrades, their self-perceived suboptimal performance during combat engendered feelings of guilt and remorse. The investigation of the cases of the Forgotten Six and their belated recovery provided partial relief to this turmoil and helped redress the ambiguity that persisted for three decades or more. For some, the recovery of the remains of the Forgotten Six represented the ultimate act of reparation, which finalised an uncompleted task.

Third, the story identifies the *affective/experiential* states endured by members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades and reveals the *strategies* they used to deal with men's loss and eventual recovery. In addition, the embedded stories reveal how family members and comrades achieved various levels of *closure* around their unresolved grief and uncompleted tasks.

Fourth, the study explores and questions the role of the Government and the ADF in recovering the remains of the Forgotten Six. The initial lack of effective management by the State of these six MIA cases compounded the experiences of those affected by the men's loss and did little to redress the ambiguity and feelings of frustration that pervaded the lives of those who lived on.



## **ADDING TO THE BODY OF KNOWLEDGE**

This study adds to the knowledge bank in two areas. First, members of the families of the Forgotten Six and their comrades, in their perception of their multiple social realities experienced four *affective/experiential* states-of-mind: *Optimism*, *Helplessness*, *Despair* and *Resignation*. Second, we demonstrated that closure in the context of unresolved grief is genuine and real. Such closure also relates to uncompleted tasks in the presence of high levels of ambiguity and guilt. Information and cognitive processes drive closure, which manifests at five possible levels: *Initial Closure*, *Forced Closure*, *Lapsed Time Closure*, *Stalled Closure* and *Enhanced Closure*. These five levels do not necessarily emerge in sequence and *Enhanced Closure* is not necessarily final or absolute.

Another important aspect of the story involves the strategies used by family members and comrades to manage their contentious issues. Strategies included *Activism*, *Substitution*, *Non-engagement* and *Acceptance*. These four generalised strategies are based on observed behaviours and provide a schema for understanding the behaviours of people dealing with ambiguous loss, unresolved grief and uncompleted tasks.

While death makes a severe impression on all family members, the impact of the deaths of the Forgotten Six on the members of their families tends to be hierarchical. The person family members perceive as most affected by the loss, identified as the central mourning figure, presides over this hierarchy. Family members need to respect this hierarchy of grief, in the interest of family harmony.

In addition, although the literature documents the significance of certain places, artefacts and events, with the grave preeminent, the symbolic importance of the grave progressively receded and most bereaved did not ritualise cemetery visits. Nonetheless, most family members and comrades desired to maintain their bonds with the Forgotten Six. These bonds tended to have positive psychosocial repercussions, particularly in relation to closure. Besides facilitating closure, the men's recovery and the subsequent remembrance and commemorative activities enabled the bereaved to engineer comfortable and durable social spaces to accommodate the identities of the dead. These social spaces, as a mental constructs enabled the bereaved to maintain their bonds with the dead independent of the grave, although the grave remained a significant artefact for some.

Perhaps of greatest concern, and as indicated on a number of occasions, was the lack of Government focus on, and support for the management of the recovery of the Forgotten Six. The bereaved looked to their Government for help in dealing with

their loss, but found none. More generally, Australian authorities were delinquent in their management of MIA matters during the second half of the twentieth century. As well as the belated recovery of the Forgotten Six and the two MIAs from Borneo, more pointedly, there are 42 yet-to-be found Australian service men from the Korean War. The use of anachronistic policies and a lack of official interest occasioned the delay of 36 years or more in recovering the Vietnam MIAs and even to this day, inhibits recovery of Australia's Korean War MIAs. Apparent is the authorities' lack of understanding of the needs and aspirations of family members and comrades in relation to lost loved ones and missing fellow service personnel.

### ***TRANSFERABILITY OF FINDINGS***

As discussed in the previous chapter, some of the current study's findings and observations might, reasonably and importantly apply to living relatives and comrades connected to unresolved MIA cases from the Second World War and the Korean War. Furthermore, some of these findings and observations might apply to individuals associated with people who go missing in Australia or to relatives and friends of Australians killed overseas where the bodies of the deceased are not recoverable.

### ***MATTERS ARISING***

A number of issues, not necessarily within the scope of this study give rise to concern. First, the absence of a Government-backed guarantee that the authorities will ensure a home burial for *all* Australian service personnel who die overseas represents a fundamental concern. Second, current ADF policy regarding the management of MIA matters requires modernisation to align it with today's societal expectations and to ensure the policy's effectiveness and economy. Third, some practical issues regarding the management of MIA matters warrant consideration. Fourth, the question arises as to whether the authorities are going to contemplate their moral obligation to treat unresolved MIA cases from the Second World War and the Korean War.

In Australia, there is an antipodean cringe in dealing with the war dead. In contrast, on 8 July 1982, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher announced British war dead, specifically 'those killed in the Falklands War could be repatriated at the request of next-of-kin'.<sup>1</sup> As we have seen, America's policy of repatriating the dead dates back to the Seminole Indian Wars of the early 1800s. As was apparent in earlier chapters,

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<sup>1</sup> N. Hewitt, 'Return of the fallen', *History Today*, Vol. 59, Issue No. 9, Sept. 2009, p. 3. Britain has subsequently applied this policy of repatriation.

returning the mortal remains of deceased service personnel to their families is important. Therefore, it seems timely and appropriate that the State should provide an assurance to the Australian public and the standing force that henceforth the Australian Government will repatriate all Australian war dead where possible, including the missing.<sup>2</sup> Current ADF policy requires 'for all operations post Vietnam, deceased service personnel will be repatriated to Australia'.<sup>3</sup> However, the caveats imposed in 1966 by Cabinet Decision No. 1487 compromise the intention and spirit of this clause.<sup>4</sup> (Perhaps the Government sanctioned the ADF's stated policy; however, efforts from 2011 onwards to establish whether the Government approved such a change proved fruitless.)

Of course, only a brave Government would adopt a policy of non-repatriation and the hope is Australia will never be confronted with a situation necessitating consideration of such an option. However, practicalities and/or possibilities are irrelevant because seeking this guarantee is a matter of ethics and culture, of national pride, based on the nation's moral obligation to service personnel who place themselves in harm's way. Furthermore, the failure to acknowledge this obligation should not compromise the capacity of families to *own* and engage with loved ones passed.

Nonetheless, there are difficulties in repatriating *all* war dead and an important concern relates to the availability of resources. Generally, it is reasonable to stop searching after the completion of area clearance operations because of the costs associated with on-going recovery operations and the difficulty in locating *all* bodies.

Depending on circumstances, the possibility of conducting historical recoveries might emerge. Three factors drive the *historical* recovery of war dead. First, a politically charged factor exists because the bodies of the dead symbolise the nation and should not be abandoned. This factor probably operates more intensely when the outcome of the war or conflict is not favourable and the bodies do not rest in a corner of a foreign

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<sup>2</sup> Australia has the logistical capability to backload bodies, considering the option of rapid movement by air and the availability of refrigeration (if movement by surface means was necessary).

<sup>3</sup> Department of Defence, 'Defence Instruction (General) PERS 20-4: Recovery of Human Remains of Australian Defence Force Members: Previously Unaccounted for', para. 4(c).

<sup>4</sup> Chapter 2 discussed these caveats in detail. Essentially the caveats limited arrangements for repatriation to 'conditions short of war or defence emergency' and 'if numbers [of bodies to be repatriated] were to become unmanageable, the principle of return at public expense could not apply'. NAA: A5827, Volume 38/Agendum 1197.

land that is 'forever ours'. Second, service personnel die while military forces prosecute national objectives. Hence, the nation owes the dead a moral obligation, to recover and appropriately commemorate them, including the missing. Third, the availability of a body or remains and the symbolism associated with a funeral assist in the grieving process.

With the passage of time the political and moral reasons generally abate and the need to provide a body to assist in the grieving process eventually disappears almost completely. Unless the political reason is a core national value and a societal expectation, it will be lessened by the passage of time. Similarly, the moral reason will also diminish as memories of the particular war or conflict recede. Furthermore, with the death of all family members and comrades of war dead, and we are talking about those who knew the decedents personally, there is less need to recover the bodies or remains to assist in private grieving. Hence, with the passing of family members and comrades of MIA personnel, a nation might reasonably and finally stop searching for its military dead. Any subsequent searching requires a re-ignition of the nation's moral obligation, as exemplified by the recoveries from Fromelles. However, the failure to pursue recovery operations endlessly is not necessarily a case of deserting the dead.

The Government and the ADF have their rhetoric when it comes to the treatment of missing service personnel and over the years from 2007 to 2011, action matched rhetoric. While it may have taken a while to get things moving on Vietnam MIAs, the last three recoveries from that theatre, as well as those from Fromelles and the work done in Borneo and PNG are examples of the authorities fulfilling their rhetoric. Nonetheless, the Government is not always as supportive when it comes to remembrance and commemoration. For example, in November 2012 the Government would not meet the costs for family members to attend a ceremony at the Bomana War Cemetery, PNG to further remember and commemorate PTE John Whitworth and two fallen comrades. Air Niugini, OAH and others partly covered these travel costs.<sup>5</sup>

Recovery operations are expensive. Hence, there is a need for a sensible and justifiable rationale to search for the missing. In order to use public monies effectively,

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<sup>5</sup> PTE Whitworth and two comrades went missing in the Celebes in 1945. Search teams recovered them shortly after the War and buried them as unknowns in the Bomana War Cemetery. Starting in 2000, Ms Sally Olander, a relative of Whitworth started researching his case, OAH assisted and Army eventually took over the investigation. After some excellent work, the Army convinced the Commonwealth War Graves Commission that three graves marked as 'unknown' in the Bomana Cemetery contained the remains of Whitworth and his comrades.

the ADF perhaps should prioritise their investigations and afford priority to cases where relatives, who personally knew the unaccounted-for individual request investigation. Hence, it might be appropriate at this stage for the ADF to re-examine its policy on MIA matters to ensure its relevance, effectiveness and economy.

The practice of policy also deserves attention. First, interested parties need to know whom to contact for information on their respective cases. Second, to the best of their ability the authorities need to ensure the subsequent provision of requested information and the maintenance of a coherent dialogue.

The relevant ADF instruction provides contact details within each Service office for persons seeking information on MIA matters.<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, the public does not have access to this instruction. The ADF needs to publicise these details along with an indication of the scope of work they are able to undertake.

Too often during the process of researching this study, situations emerged where authorities lacked accurate information needed to apprise family members of the progress on their case. For example, in May 1984, an Army spokesperson referred Carmel Hendrie, Gillespie's widow, to the account of the loss incident involving her husband, as recorded in Ian McNeill's 1984 work, *The Team: Australian Army Advisers in Vietnam 1962–1972*.<sup>7</sup> McNeill's account contained a number of inaccuracies.<sup>8</sup> Shane Herbert, Michael Herbert's brother, referencing the period shortly before 2002 noted 'even the most respected groups and most respected areas in the Australian Government were still coming up with incorrect information'.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, because closure is 'information driven', information provided by the authorities needs to be accurate and handled carefully. The managing agency, in this case the ADF should avoid withholding reliable and verified information from interested parties, on the basis that it may be unpalatable. Generally, the families of the missing want the facts.

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<sup>6</sup> Department of Defence, 'Defence Instruction (General) PERS 20-4: Recovery of Human Remains of Australian Defence Force Members: Previously Unaccounted for', Annex B.

<sup>7</sup> B. Gray, 'Missing' digger died—ex-medic', *Herald* (Melbourne), 26 May 1984, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> McNeill, *The Team: Australian Army Advisers in Vietnam 1962–1972*, pp. 454–5. Chapter 2 elaborates on the inaccuracies in the literature regarding the reporting of the details of a number of the loss incidents.

<sup>9</sup> Herbert, 'Having a brother (Michael Herbert) declared as MIA and his subsequent recovery and repatriation after 38 years'.

Periodic briefings of family members and relevant others would engender a more open and inclusive approach to the management of Australia's war dead.<sup>10</sup>

The rotation of service personnel through various postings every two or three years exacerbates the difficulty of maintaining the continuity of a meaningful dialogue with the relatives of MIAs. A central repository for information regarding each MIA case is required to provide a corporate memory, at least for active cases. Details should include not only information concerning the missing service person and the circumstances of their loss, but also details of the member's family and a record of on-going contacts with them by the relevant staff. (One would hope this matter is now in hand.)

In cases where the State hesitates in taking action on unresolved cases, private researchers or lobbyists, including family members can sometimes galvanise the authorities by persuading them to undertake recovery operations or at least to investigate specific cases. The work of lobbyists external to the families is made easier if family members of the MIA person support Government intervention. Private researchers may provide a useful resource to supplement official efforts. The ADF should consider ways in which the services of private researchers might be more effectively harnessed. Hence, along with the revision of the ADF policy regarding MIA matters, appropriate practical actions would need to be taken to implement any policy changes.

As an aside, considering the task at hand is to deal with unresolved MIA cases, perhaps the name of the Army unit, the Unrecovered War Casualties–Army should be changed to '*Unresolved War Casualties–Army*', and its mission amended accordingly.<sup>11</sup>

Notwithstanding the policy and practical issues associated with MIA matters, there is a lack of effort applied to resolving extant MIA cases, particularly where families have indicated their desire to have their cases investigated. The moral

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<sup>10</sup> Elements of information regarding unresolved cases are not matters of national security and the authorities would do well to share such information with family members and relevant others. *Managing expectations* should not be the primary focus in the management of unresolved MIA cases. Family members appreciate having a conclusive outcome, based on sustainable evidence. Hence, the authorities responsible for the management of unresolved cases should focus on the investigative function, sharing information with family members and comrades of the missing and interacting with them as necessary.

<sup>11</sup> The title of the current iteration of the relevant ADF policy at least acknowledges the true issue at hand by the use of the term 'unaccounted for', which effectively equates to 'unresolved'. Department of Defence, 'Defence Instruction (General) PERS 20-4: Recovery of Human Remains of Australian Defence Force Members: Previously Unaccounted for'.

obligation to the dead and their families demands that the State make genuine efforts to recover the bodies of the fallen, especially where relatives who knew the decedents personally are still living.

Australia has made no substantive efforts post-war to recover her 42 MIAs from Korea. In March 2010, the *Canberra Times* reported the UWC–A would continue to monitor Army MIA cases from the Korean War and would hold discussions with JPAC in Hawaii, to be ready to react to any information concerning these MIAs.<sup>12</sup> In November 2011, Army launched the Korean War Project, seeking to contact relatives of the Korean War MIAs and 'veterans of the Korean War who may have first hand knowledge about the battles where their mates went missing'.<sup>13</sup> However, this project will require more weight than the UWC–A can provide in isolation—political weight.

Nevertheless, politicians, unless pressured, do not readily act on MIA matters. According to ADF policy, the responsibility for managing MIA matters primarily rests with the Deputy Chiefs of the Services.<sup>14</sup> Hence, these generals are the tradition bearers for MIA matters and are in a position to advise the politicians appropriately, to set the moral beacon. In short, MIA matters are too important for the community to leave them solely in the hands of transient politicians. However, it seems the generals have done little to energise the Government to arrange for investigation the cases of the 42 Australian MIAs from the Korean War. Admittedly, grief subsides over time but in most cases the grieving process never ends completely. There are many living relatives and comrades of these MIAs from Korea, who still ponder the fate of the missing. Most families provided at least one FRS to assist in identification of any recovered remains. Any action on these cases would require diplomatic engagement with the DPRK, and perhaps China and the US.

During and after the Second World War the authorities recovered, but could not identify over 12,000 Australian casualties and buried these persons as *unknown*. There are a decreasing number of unresolved cases from the Second World War where there are living relatives and comrades who know the missing personally. However, as

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<sup>12</sup> M. Blenkin, 'Push to find diggers final resting place', *Canberra Times*, 27 Mar. 2010, sec. News, p. 14.

<sup>13</sup> Unrecovered War Casualties–Army, 'Korean War Project Begins', Department of Defence, Canberra, ACT, <<http://www.army.gov.au/Our-work/Unrecovered-War-Casualties/Updates/Korean-War-Project-Begins>>, accessed 3 Nov. 2012.

<sup>14</sup> Department of Defence, 'Defence Instruction (General) PERS 20-4: Recovery of Human Remains of Australian Defence Force Members: Previously Unaccounted for', para. 10.

recent experience shows, desktop research could solve some of these unresolved cases.

Hence, there is an opportunity to bring a degree of comfort and closure to at least some family members regarding loved ones unaccounted-for from the Second World War and the Korean War. Regardless of whether searchers recover remains or not, investigation by a competent authority can bring a degree of solace to the bereaved.

In summary, four matters arising require attention. First, an astute government could seize on the opportunity to declare its hand on the MIA issue by announcing a policy of guaranteed repatriation of Australian war dead. Second, the ADF might consider re-examining its policy on MIA matters to ensure the policy's effectiveness and economy. Third, to give effect to their policy and their latent capability the ADF should promulgate contact details, for those requiring follow up of their cases, along with an indication of the support available. Fourth, the Government and the ADF should commit to investigating unresolved cases from the Second World War and the Korean War, on request of the NOK. Considering the upsurge of Australian's interest over the last two decades of the twentieth century in the place of war and the meaning of wartime sacrifice, culminating in the centenary commemorations around the First World War, the time is right for the Government to declare and demonstrate the nation's moral obligation to her war dead and their families. These measures would help define Australia's national identity.

## **VALUE CLAIMS**

Over the course of the twentieth century, Australia treated her MIAs in a way that reflected a degree of disenfranchisement of the families and the comrades of the missing, at least by twenty-first century standards. Bereavement and grief are difficult topics for people to broach, especially when individuals are directly affected, and even more so when the deceased's body is unavailable. Similarly, confronting guilt and remorse associated with uncompleted tasks during wartime is sometimes problematic. Because of the nature of such issues, we often hesitate to debate and discuss them. Conversations often become emotionally charged and logical and ethical debate becomes difficult and risky. Nonetheless, despite the fraught nature of the task, the stories embedded in this study provide first hand accounts of experiences around ambiguous loss and unresolved grief, and of guilt and remorse associated with uncompleted tasks during wartime. The value of this work resides in the fact that data provided by individuals ground these accounts and the subsequent interpretations of



them. Furthermore, this study deals with Australia's most recent experience around trauma associated with the non-recovery of service personnel during wartime.

## **REFLECTIONS**

The story is broad and ventures into highly emotive areas. Participants generously shared and exposed their private thoughts and feelings. At times, this disclosure was confronting and/or disturbing. The reasons why some chose not to participate in this study are now much clearer.

The story privileged the voice of family members, comrades and others as they engaged with their contentious issues while acting out their everyday lives. The thick descriptions of the experiences of these people allow the reader to see life through the subjects' eyes. I necessarily interpreted such experiences and hope my interpretations do not blur the lens. The embedded stories present a detailed picture of what it is like to live in the contemporary world while subject to historical and unresolved matters of the heart and conscience. This study also hints at the need for a paradigm shift in the conduct of research into grief and mourning, toward an interpretivist perspective that attends to and hears the voices of the bereaved.

I hope this research delivers some practical action-oriented benefits by stimulating discussion and further action around the management of unresolved cases involving missing Australian service personnel.

Regardless of the value of this study, the accounts of the experiences of the family members and comrades of the Forgotten Six are a lasting testament to their fortitude and resilience in the face of adversity. They displayed high levels of rationality in accommodating their emotional ambiguities while managing their contentious issues. Progressively there was an acceptance of things as they were, as they moved on with their lives. The human spirit, its resilience and logicity shine through.

## **APPENDICES**

The following appendices are inserted as stand-alone documents:

Appendix A. Prosopographies of Persons of Interest

Appendix B. Synopses of the Loss Incidents and Recovery Efforts

Appendix C. Structures of the Six Affected Families

Appendix D. Casualty Classifications of the Six Men

## PROSOPOGRAPHIES OF PERSONS OF INTEREST

### ***PREAMBLE***

The prosopographies offered herein relate to the Forgotten Six, a selection of family members and some of the men's comrades and associates.

The enclosed tables use the individual's family name as of 2014. The person's full given name or names are included, where known. In some cases, the names by which the individuals were generally known were not the first given name and, in such cases the name generally used is shown in brackets.

The data used to compile these prosopographies came mainly from the questionnaires that participants provided and from various sources within the public domain. The details of the Vietnam service of the men's comrades and associates are included as footnotes in the main document, and this appendix consolidates those details for the reader's convenience.

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**Table A-1: Prosopographies of the Six Men**

PERSON	GENERAL BACKGROUND	ENLISTMENT	EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND	MARITAL HISTORY	VIETNAM SERVICE	OTHER ISSUES
<b>Carver,</b> Robert Charles	b. 2 July 1946, Toowoomba, Qld (second born) d. 3 Nov. 1970, Vietnam	Carver enlisted in the RAAF on 10 Jan. 1969 at the age of 22.	Carver attended Harristown High School in Toowoomba, Qld, graduating in 1963. He qualified as a radiographer in 1965 and subsequently trained and qualified as a navigator in the RAAF.	Carver was not married.	Carver served in Vietnam with 2 Squadron RAAF from 16 Sept. to 3 Nov. 1970.	The Carver family were long-term residents of Toowoomba, Qld. Harristown High School commemorated Carver with a display of his memorabilia at the school. Carver's father, Syd eventually had his son's name engraved on the Toowoomba War Memorial. <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Powell, 'The Hunt for Magpie 91'.

<b>Fisher, David John Elkington</b>	b. 4 June 1946, Hendon, Middlesex, UK (second born) <sup>2</sup> d. 27 Sept. 1969, Vietnam	Fisher enlisted in the Regular Army Supplement (National Service) on 17 July 1967 at the age of 21.	Fisher attended school in Balgowlah, NSW and subsequently was a student at Sydney Grammar School. Fisher completed his Leaving Certificate in 1962. In 1963, he began working as an audit clerk and commenced studying accountancy at the Institute of Chartered Accountants. <sup>3</sup>	Fisher was not married.	Fisher served in Vietnam with 2 SAS Squadron from 16 Dec. 1968 to 20 Feb. 1969 and with 3 SAS Squadron from 21 Feb. to 27 Sept. 1969.	The Fisher family were long-term residents of Sydney, NSW, eventually settling in the northern suburb of Balgowlah Heights. Fisher was a keen rugby player and was a member of the Mossman Rugby Union Club. Since 1970, the Club has honoured Fisher annually by awarding the Dave Fisher Memorial Trophy. <sup>4</sup> In 1995, Sydney Grammar School commemorated Fisher with a plaque, which hangs on the southern wall of the Big School Room. <sup>5</sup>
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<sup>2</sup> Certified Copy of an Entry of a Birth given at the General Registry Office BXCE dated 22 May 2010.

<sup>3</sup> NAA: B2458, 2787344.

<sup>4</sup> Anon, 'Vale, dear friend'.

<sup>5</sup> Anon, 'Dedication of a memorial plaque to David Fisher, David Brian and Trevor Lyddieth on 28 July'.

<b>Gillespie,</b> John Francis	b. 14 Feb. 1947, Melbourne, Vic. (second born) d. 17 Apr. 1971, Vietnam	Gillespie served in the Citizen Military Forces from 7 Feb. to 21 Nov. 1968 and enlisted in the Regular Army for 6 years on 11 June 1969 at the age of 22. While in Vietnam, on 7 Jan. 1971 Gillespie received a promotion to LCPL, as an Assistant Medic. <sup>6</sup>	Gillespie grew up in the Melbourne suburb of Glen Huntly, where he attended school.	Gillespie married Carmel O'Sullivan on 27 May 1967 at St Christopher's Church, Syndal, Vic.	Gillespie served in Vietnam with 8 Field Ambulance from 16 Sept. 1970 to 17 Apr. 1971.
<b>Gillson,</b> Peter Raymond	b. 16 Oct. 1945, Moreland, Vic. (third born) d. 8 Nov. 1965, Vietnam	Gillson enlisted in the Regular Army on 12 Nov. 1962 at the age of 17.	Gillson attended Brunswick Technical School (now known as Brunswick Secondary College).	Gillson married Lorraine Easton at All Saints Church in Liverpool, NSW on 9 Jan. 1965. Lorraine was 17 years of age at the time of her marriage.	Gillson served in Vietnam with 1 RAR from 3 June to 8 Nov. 1965.

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<sup>6</sup> NAA: B2458, 3170244.

<b>Herbert,</b> Michael Patrick John	b. 6 Sept. 1946, Freeling, SA (first born) d. 3 Nov. 1970, Vietnam	Herbert enlisted as a cadet in the RAAF on 17 Jan. 1964 at the age of 17 and undertook his initial flying training at the RAAF Academy at Point Cook.	Herbert attended Sacred Heart College in Somerton Park, SA to undertake his secondary education. He gained his BSc under the auspices of the University of Melbourne as part of his training at the RAAF Academy, Point Cook.	Herbert was not married.	Herbert served in Vietnam with 2 Squadron RAAF from 25 Feb. to 3 Nov. 1970.	Herbert was interested in flying from an early age and gained his civil pilot's licence at the age of 16. <sup>7</sup> He served in the South Australian Flying Air Training Corps from Sept. 1960 to Jan. 1964.
<b>Parker,</b> Richard Harold John (AKA Richard Harold John Heath) (Tiny)	b. 22 Aug. 1941, Sydney, NSW (second born) d. 8 Nov. 1965, Vietnam	Parker enlisted in the Regular Army on 11 Apr. 1961 at the age of 19. He received promotion to LCPL on 30 Nov. 1963.	Parker completed first year high school in Sydney before enlisting. He qualified for the Army Class 2 Educational Certificate in July 1964.	Parker married Wendy Budge at St Mathias Church of England, Woollahra, NSW on 29 Sept. 1962. After they were married, the couple took up residence in Dulwich Hill, NSW.	Parker served in Vietnam with 1 RAR from 1 June to 8 Nov. 1965.	On the day of his enlistment, Parker changed his name from Heath to Parker by Statutory Declaration, declaring he took his stepfather's name when his mother remarried. <sup>8</sup> This is incongruous because Parker's stepfather was named Brew.

<sup>7</sup> Staff Reporters, 'Hopes kept alive for 2 airmen lost in Vietnam'.

<sup>8</sup> NAA: B2458, 213963.

**Table A-2: Prosopographies of Selected Family Members**

PERSON	GENERAL BACKGROUND	RELATIONSHIP TO DECEDENT	MARITAL HISTORY	MILITARY SERVICE	RELIGIOSITY	OTHER DETAILS
<b>Carver,</b> Shelagh Edna (Edna)	b. 1911 d. 1997	Mother of Robert Carver	Edna married Syd Carver on 11 Sept. 1937.		Faith: Christian Denomination: Church of England Practice: Religious	Syd and Edna Carver took up residence in Toowoomba, Qld and lived there for the rest of their lives at various addresses, eventually establishing the family home at Joyce Street, Toowoomba.
<b>Carver,</b> Susanna (nee Toal) (Anna)	b. 1940, Ireland	Sister-in-Law of Robert Carver	Susanna married Bill Carver on 6 Oct. 1973.		Faith: Christian Denomination: Roman Catholic Practice: Very Religious	Susanna migrated from Ireland in 1972 and did not meet the Carver family until 1973, approximately three years after Robert Carver was declared MIA.

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<b>Carver,</b> Sydney William (Syd)	b. 1910 d. 1996	Father of Robert Carver	See Carver, Edna.	Syd served in the RAAF from 15 July 1940 to 29 Oct. 1945. He served as a rigger and as a fitter, and achieved the rank of Corporal (CPL) in Aug. 1944. Syd rendered one year and two months service outside the Australian mainland. <sup>9</sup>	Faith: Christian Denomination: Church of England Practice: Religious	See Carver, Edna.
<b>Carver,</b> William John (Bill)	b. 1938 d. 2009	Elder brother of Robert Carver	See Carver, Susanna.		Faith: Christian Denomination: Not Known Practice: Religious	

(Continued)

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<sup>9</sup> NAA: A9301, 22992.

<b>Cowdroy,</b> Ann Winifred Margaret (nee Fisher)	b. 1942, England (first born)	Elder Sister of David Fisher	Ann married Peter Cowdroy in the late sixties, probably before 1968, and they had two children, Mike and Nicola.	Faith: Christian Denomination: Not Known Practice: Not Known	Mike Cowdroy died from injuries sustained in a car accident in 2003. <sup>10</sup>
<b>Easton,</b> Lorraine Kay (nee Hawes, nee Gillson, nee Easton)	b. 1947	Widow of Peter Gillson	See Gillson, Peter Raymond for details of Lorraine's first marriage. Lorraine subsequently married John Hawes on 16 June 1967 at the Church of England, Rockdale, NSW.	Faith: Christian Denomination: Roman Catholic Practice: Religious	In Nov. 1967, Lorraine and John Hawes had a son, Craig. The couple were divorced on 10 Dec. 1986 after which Lorraine had a relationship with a man named Chevalier. It is not known how long the relationship persisted but Lorraine was using the Chevalier name in correspondence during 2002 to 2005.

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<sup>10</sup> Byrnes, 'A sad loss'.

<b>Fisher,</b> William Alfred	b. 1915, England d. 1978	Father of David Fisher	In 1939, William married Winifred Mary Thornitt Elkington in Heliopolis, which is about 18 km northeast of downtown Cairo. <sup>11</sup> After the unfortunate death of Winifred at 38 years of age in Oct. 1956, William married Margaret Tomkinson. Margaret already had one daughter, Julia. A daughter, Penelope was born to William and Margaret around 1961.	William served in the Royal Air Force from Jan. 1931 to June 1950. During the War, he saw service in the Middle East with 216 Squadron. Flight Sergeant Fisher was awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal in Apr. 1942. <sup>12</sup> Fisher was commissioned on 31 Oct. 1942. On 23 June 1948, he was allotted to the Special Duties List, for service in Australia. On separation from the Royal Air Force in June 1950, Fisher elected to take his discharge in Australia. <sup>13</sup>	Not Known	There was definitely a tradition of service in the Fisher family. William's father served in the Royal Navy.
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<sup>11</sup> Births Deaths and Marriages, Death Certificate for William Alfred Fisher, Registration Number 19846/1978.

<b>Gillespie,</b> Christine Mary	b. 1944 d. 2012	Elder Sister of John Gillespie		Faith: Christian Denomination: Roman Catholic Practice: Non- practising	Christine joined OAH in 2006. In Sept. 2007, Peter Aylett and I escorted her to Vietnam, along with a film crew from <i>Australian Story</i> , to visit the site where her brother died.
<b>Gillespie,</b> Francis Mahon (Frank)	b. 1914 d. 1982	Father of John Gillespie	Frank married Moya Lalor in 1942. Moya died in 1965.	Faith: Christian Denomination: Roman Catholic Practice: Very Religious	Both parents were devout Catholics. Christine described her father as possessing 'idiosyncratic religiosity', being a 'heavy drinker and a daily communicant'. Frank suffered from a brain tumour in the early years of the Second World War. He later worked in a munitions factory.

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<sup>12</sup> Anon, 'Distinguished Flying Medal', *Supplement to the London Gazette*, 7 Apr. 1942, <<http://www.london-gazette.co.uk/issues/35514/supplements/1557/page.pdf>>, accessed 19 Sept. 2012.

<sup>13</sup> NAA: A12288, 7/190.

<b>Gillson, Leslie Vernon (Les)</b>	b. 1912, Canada d. 1976	Father of Peter Gillson		Les served in the Militia as a sapper for five months in 1945 and subsequently with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> AIF from 2 Oct. 1942 to 20 Nov. 1945. <sup>14</sup>	Not Known	
<b>Gillson, Robert Jr</b>	b. 1965	Son of Peter and Lorraine Gillson	Robert's first marriage was of short duration. He subsequently married Lisa Barnes in England in 1994 but was later divorced. Gillson married Lisa Nehrkorn in 2013.	Robert Jr joined the Army Reserve in 2004 and received his commission as a Lieutenant in 2007. Robert served in Afghanistan (2010–11) and now holds the rank of Captain (2014).	Faith: Christian Denomination: Roman Catholic Practice: Religious	Robert Gillson was known as Robert Hawes until he was about 12 years old, which would have been around 1979. Thereafter he reverted to using his birth name. Gillson was a member of OAH.
<b>Gillson, Robert Snr</b>	b. 1943	Elder brother of Peter Gillson		Robert Snr served in Vietnam with 1 RAR from 30 Oct. 1965 to 3 June 1966.	Faith: Christian Denomination: Church of England Practice: Non-practising	

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<sup>14</sup> NAA: B883, VX110012.

<b>Hawes, Craig</b>	b. 1967	Son of John Hawes and Lorraine Easton (Peter Gillson's widow)		Not Known
<b>Hendrie, Carmel</b> (nee Gillespie, nee O'Sullivan)	b. 1949	Widow of John Gillespie	See Gillespie, John Francis for details of Carmel's first marriage. In the early 1970s, Carmel developed a relationship with Ron Hendrie, a Vietnam veteran. Carmel and Ron eventually married in June 2006.	Faith: Christian Denomination: Roman Catholic Practice: Very Religious

(Continued)

<b>Herbert,</b> Joan Patricia (nee Skehan)	b. 1920 d. 2003	Mother of Michael Herbert	Joan married John Herbert in Adelaide, SA on 8 Dec. 1945.	Joan served in the Australian Women's Army Service for two years commencing on 8 Dec. 1943. She trained as a search light operator and was posted to 55 Australian Search Light Battery. Joan served in Darwin from 23 July to 30 Sept. 1945. <sup>15</sup>	Faith: Christian Denomination: Roman Catholic Practice: Very Religious	Joan and John Herbert established their family home in Kibby Avenue, Glenelg North, SA, sometime before July 1951. The couple lived there for the rest of their lives, raising their three children. Joan was a staunch Roman Catholic and supported her local Church vigorously.
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<sup>15</sup> NAA: B884, SF113326.

<b>Herbert,</b> John Patrick Joseph	b. 1923	Father of Michael Herbert	See Herbert, Joan.	John joined the RAAF on 10 June 1941 and served until 21 Aug. 1946, attaining the rank of CPL in Apr. 1945. John enlisted in the Citizen Air Force on 9 July 1951 and served to May 1962, attaining the rank of FLGOFF in June 1958. <sup>16</sup>	Faith: Christian Denomination: Roman Catholic Practice: Religious	See Herbert, Joan. John was a gregarious fellow and enjoyed his sporting and social life.
<b>Herbert,</b> Kerry (Kerryn)	b. 1952 or 1954 (second born)	Younger sister of Michael Herbert			Faith: Christian Denomination: Roman Catholic Practice: Not Known	
<b>Herbert,</b> Shane	b. 1959 (third born)	Younger brother of Michael Herbert			Faith: Christian Denomination: Roman Catholic Practice: Religious	
<i>(Continued)</i>						

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<sup>16</sup> NAA: A12372, R/4904/H.



<b>Mudford,</b> Wendy Kathleen (nee Parker, nee Budge)	b. Around 1941	Widow of Richard Parker	See Parker, Richard Harold John for details of Wendy's first marriage. Wendy married Don Mudford on 13 Feb. 1984, more than 18 years after her first husband went missing.	Faith: Christian Denomination: Church of England Practice: Not Known
<b>Pike,</b> Fiona (nee Gillespie)	b. 1969	Daughter John and Carmel Gillespie		Faith: Christian Denomination: Roman Catholic Practice: Non- practising

*(Continued)*

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<b>Woodland,</b> Patricia (nee Heath)	b. 1934 (first born)	Elder sister of Richard Parker	Patricia married Hilton Woodland on 30 Jan. 1954. Hilton died in 1997.	Faith: Christian Denomination: Church of England Practice: Non- practising	Because of an incident involving her stepfather, Eugene Brew around 1950 or 1951, Patricia became a Ward of the State and spent time confined to the NSW State Industrial School at Parramatta. Patricia did not attend the wedding of her brother and Wendy (Budge) in Sept. 1962 and Patricia and Wendy did not meet one another until 2002.
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**Table A-3: Prosopographies of Selected Comrades and Associates**

PERSON	GENERAL BACKGROUND	ENLISTMENT	VIETNAM SERVICE	MIA CASE	INTERACTIONS WITH THE DECEDENTS (PERIOD AND NATURE)	POST SERVICE LIFE	RELIGIOSITY
<b>Butterworth,</b> Colin William	b. 16 Sept. 1943	Army: 1963–86	Butterworth served in Vietnam with 1 RAR from 3 June 1965 to 5 June 1966.	Parker and Gillson	Two years	Butterworth retired in 1991.	Faith: Christian Denomination: Church of England Practice: Non- practising
<b>Carpenter,</b> Barry John	b. 21 Nov. 1948	RAAF: 1966– 87	Carpenter served in Vietnam with 2 Squadron RAAF from 19 Dec. 1969 to 27 Nov. 1970.	Herbert	Three years	As of 2013, Carpenter was working in Hong Kong in the aviation industry.	Faith: Christian Denomination: Not Known Practice: Non- practising
<b>Bird,</b> John William	b. 27 July 1948	RAAF: 1966– 72	Bird served in Vietnam with 2 Squadron RAAF from 18 Feb. 1970 to 19 Feb. 1971.	Herbert and Carver	Two years: Bird was supposed to fly with Herbert and Carver on their final mission, as an observer but did not do so because of bad weather.	Bird retired in 1989.	Faith: Christian Denomination: Not Known Practice: Not Known

*(Continued)*

**Denny,**  
William  
Thomas (Bill)

b. 16 Oct.  
1949

Army: 1968-90

Denny served in Vietnam with 86 Transport Platoon (Royal Australian Army Service Corps) from 29 Jan. 1971 to 9 Mar. 1972.

Herbert

Five years: Denny was a friend of the Herbert family in the five years before the loss incident, although this relationship was somewhat superficial. During 2000 to 2003, Denny had extensive dealings with Michael Herbert's mother, Joan Herbert.

As of 2014, Denny was working as a solicitor within the SA Government.

Faith: Christian  
Denomination: Roman Catholic  
Practice: Religious

(Continued)

<b>Domaschenz,</b> Laurence Ben (Sam)	b. 27 Feb. 1946 d. Aug. 2007	Army: Period of service not available	Domaschenz served in Vietnam with 1 RAR from 3 June 1965 to 5 June 1966.	Gillson	Period of interaction was not established. However, Domaschenz was a member of 3 Platoon A Company 1 RAR in 1965. Gillson was the No. 1 on one of the three machine guns in 3 Platoon and Domaschenz was Gillson's No. 2 on the gun. Domaschenz was travelling beside Gillson when he was shot on 8 Nov. 1965.	Not Known	Not Known
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<b>Hagan, Trevor Frank</b>	b. 19 May 1939	Army: 1959–83	Hagan served in Vietnam with 1 RAR from 1 June 1965 to 11 June 1966; and, with the 8 <sup>th</sup> Battalion Royal Australian Regiment from 17 Nov. 1969 to 12 Nov. 1970.	Parker	One year: In Nov. 1965, Hagan was a Section Commander in 1 Platoon, A Company, 1 RAR. Parker was Hagan's Second-in-Command. For the operation in early Nov. 1965, Hagan stepped up to be Acting Platoon Sergeant of 1 Platoon. Parker took command of Hagan's Section.	Hagan retired in 1994. Hagan was a member of OAH and travelled to Vietnam in Nov. 2005 to assist in locating the Parker–Gillson loss incident site. He subsequently returned to Vietnam with OAH in May 2006 and Jan.–Feb. 2007 to assist with further searching.	Faith: Christian Denomination: Not Known Practice: Non-practising
<b>Host, William John (Bill)</b>	b. 18 Apr. 1949	Army: 1969–71	Host served in Vietnam with 33 Dental Unit from 5 Nov. 1970 to 19 Aug. 1971.	Gillespie	Six months	Host retired in 2006.	Faith: Other Convictions

(Continued)

<b>Liddington,</b> Leslie Alphonse (Les)	b. 27 Jan. 1949	Army: Details of service not available but Liddington served for 9 years in all.	Liddington served in Vietnam with the 1 <sup>st</sup> Australian Reinforcement Unit, 3 SAS Squadron and 1 SAS Squadron from 3 Sept. 1969 to 3 Sept. 1970.	Fisher	Approximately one month	Liddington retired in 2007.	Faith: Christian Denomination: Roman Catholic Practice: Non-practising
<b>Maher,</b> Bernard Leslie (Les)	b. 28 May 1936	Army: 1955–76	Maher served in Vietnam with AATTV from 14 Jan. to 25 Nov. 1971.	Gillespie	Maher had no personal contact with Gillespie but was involved in the incident where he was killed.	Maher retired in 1997. Maher accompanied the OAH Team that visited the Gillespie site in Nov. 2006.	Faith: Christian Denomination: Roman Catholic Practice: Non-practising
<b>O'Brien,</b> Gavin Anthony Joseph	b. 15 Dec. 1948	Army: 1970–71	O'Brien served in Vietnam with 8 Field Ambulance from 10 Nov. 1970 to 21 Oct. 1971.	Gillespie	Six months	O'Brien retired in 2006.	Faith: Christian Denomination: Roman Catholic Practice: Very Religious

(Continued)

<b>Peterson,</b> Gordon Hewat	b. 12 Nov. 1939	Army: 1961–83	Peterson served in Vietnam with 1 RAR from 3 June 1965 to 5 June 1966 and with AATTV from 15 July to 28 Oct. 1971.	Parker	One year: In 1965, Peterson was the Platoon Sergeant of 1 Platoon A Company 1 RAR. The Platoon Commander was wounded during a previous operation and was still convalescing, so Peterson stood in as Acting Platoon Commander for the operation where Parker was killed.	Peterson retired in 1997. Peterson was a member of OAH and travelled to Vietnam in Nov. 2005 to assist in locating the Parker–Gillson loss incident site.	Faith: Christian Denomination: Roman Catholic Practice: Religious
<b>Saxton,</b> Paul Richard	b. 15 Oct. 1946, England	Army: 1968–77	Saxton served in Vietnam with the 1 <sup>st</sup> Australian Reinforcement Unit from 30 July to 10 Aug. and with 3 SAS Squadron from 11 Aug. 1969 to 18 Feb. 1970.	Fisher	One year	Saxton retired in 2002.	Faith: None (Atheist)

(Continued)



<b>Stephens,</b> Robert Albert (Bob)	b. 22 May 1943	Stephens was discharged from the RAAF in Dec. 1972 but re-enlisted in 1985 and served until 1993.	Stephens served in Vietnam with 9 Squadron RAAF from 23 July 1970 to 5 May 1971.	Gillespie	Approximately four months	Stephens retired in 2007.	Faith: Christian Denomination: Salvation Army Practice: Very religious
<b>Thirkell,</b> Albert Thomas (Shorty)	b. 26 Feb. 1945	Army: 1964–69	Thirkell served in Vietnam with 1 RAR from 3 June 1965 to 5 June 1966 and again from 18 Mar. to 3 June 1968. Thirkell's second tour was cut short because he was wounded-in- action.	Gillson	Two years	Thirkell retired in 1999. Thirkell was a member of OAH but did not travel to Vietnam.	Faith: Christian Denomination: Church of England Practice: Religious
<b>Weekes,</b> Gregory Douglas	b. 12 June 1949	RAAF: 1968– 2005	Weekes served in Vietnam with 2 Squadron RAAF from 25 Feb. 1970 to 18 Feb. 1971.	Carver	Four years	Weekes retired in 2005.	Faith: Christian Denomination: Church of England Practice: Religious

(Continued)

<b>Williams,</b> Clive Owen Gestern	b. 1 Mar. 1945, England	Army: 1963–81	Williams served in Vietnam with 1 RAR from 3 June 1965 to 28 May 1966. He pursued a career in Defence Intelligence (1981–2002) and was Head of the (Defence) Imagery Exploitation Centre (1993–94).	Gillson	Approximately nine months: Williams was Gillson's Platoon Commander in 1965.	Williams was a member of OAH and travelled to Vietnam with OAH in May 2006 to assist in locating the Parker–Gillson loss incident site. As of 2012, Williams was an Adjunct Professor at the Centre for Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism at Macquarie University.	Faith: None (Agnostic)
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(Continued)

<b>Zegers, Roy</b>	b. 13 July 1948, Indonesia	RAAF: 1969– 81	Zegers served in Vietnam with 9 Squadron RAAF from Feb. to Aug. 1971.	Gillespie	Approximately four months	Zegers travelled to Vietnam on a number of occasions to assist OAH and the Government team in connection with the Gillespie case. As of 2014, Zegers was working at Australian Radar Detection Services.	Faith: Christian Denomination: Roman Catholic Practice: Religious
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## SYNOPSIS OF THE LOSS INCIDENTS AND RECOVERY EFFORTS

### ***PREAMBLE***

This appendix provides background regarding the four loss incidents involving the Forgotten Six, including an outline of the associated recovery efforts; the official investigations carried out during the War; and, basic details of the Australian Government Mission that visited Vietnam in 1984, seeking information regarding the six men. Details of the men's eventual recovery are also included.

Three general characteristics of the loss incidents and the associated recovery efforts are noted. First, the opposing force generally dominated the locations where the loss incidents occurred and this inhibited post-combat recovery efforts during the War. Second, Australian troops took part in combat operations in Vietnam for a period of just over nine years and the loss events occurred in years 3, 7, 8 and 9 of Australia's involvement in the War.<sup>1</sup> In effect, the Australian capability to conduct post-combat recovery operations ended in November 1971, with the withdrawal of the last Australian infantry battalion from Vietnam. After November, some minor units remained in Vietnam for various periods, but these units had no operational search capabilities. Third, the degree of autonomy of the units in which the men served affected the unit commanders' ability to allocate resources to carry out post-combat recoveries. This lack of autonomy was particularly noticeable in the cases of Parker and Gillson. Nevertheless, the post-combat recovery efforts that took place in the cases of Fisher, and Herbert and Carver ranged in duration from three to six days, and were of high intensity judging by the resources applied.<sup>2</sup> Hence, the lack of access to the loss incidents areas coupled with limited resource availability inhibited post-combat recovery operations during the War. Furthermore, it would appear the searchers terminated their operations when it was reasonably clear the missing persons were unlikely to be alive.

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<sup>1</sup> Until Afghanistan, the Vietnam War was Australia's longest period of operations abroad.

<sup>2</sup> Although the adequacy of the actions taken during these post-combat operations can be debated, due acknowledgement must be made of the professionalism of those involved. The commanders on the ground did not have the benefit of hindsight: they were required to make professional judgments based on the facts they had to hand and that is what they did.

## **PARKER AND GILLSON**

LCPL Richard Parker and PTE Peter Gillson were members of A Company 1 RAR in 1965. 1 RAR was under the operational control of the US 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade and operated as the Brigade's third battalion. In early 1965, the Brigade established a defensive position adjacent to the Bien Hoa Air Base, approximately 30 km northeast of Saigon. The advance elements of 1 RAR began deploying to Vietnam in March, with the main body arriving in June.

On 5 November 1965, 1 RAR and 1/503 Battalion deployed into an area of operations approximately 17 km northeast of their base location. 1 RAR conducted an airmobile assault into Landing Zone (LZ) Jack in the vicinity of GR YT 134 257, east of the Dong Nai River and 1/503 Battalion flew into LZ King on the west of the River.<sup>3</sup> The operation was code named Operation Hump. On the afternoon of 8 November at approximately 1630 hrs, A Company 1 RAR encountered elements of the Vietnamese C238 Company just over 3.5 km southeast of LZ Jack. Parker and Gillson were hit by enemy fire during the ensuing battle. Because of the intensity of the enemy fire, members of A Company did not attempt to recover Parker and those present believed he was killed.<sup>4</sup> Sergeant Colin Fawcett (1937–1994) and PTE Laurence Domaschenz (1946–2007) attempted to recover Gillson's body but were unable to do so; however, Fawcett was able to get close enough to Gillson to confirm he had no pulse.<sup>5</sup>

After 1 RAR returned to base on 9 November, the Battalion staff drafted a plan to re-enter the Parker and Gillson loss incident area. The operation was to take place over three days, from 15 to 17 November.<sup>6</sup> However, the Battalion was required elsewhere for a Brigade-sized operation, Operation New Life, which commenced on 21 November.<sup>7</sup> Hence, 1 RAR was unable to undertake the planned post-combat recovery operation to retrieve Parker and Gillson and no subsequent efforts were made during the War to recover the men's bodies or to determine their fate.

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<sup>3</sup> 29th Engineer Battalion US Army, 'Map, Vietnam, Tan Uyen, Series L7014, Sheet 6331 II, 1:50,000'.

<sup>4</sup> The nominal Platoon Commander of Parker's platoon was Second Lieutenant Rick Culpitt. Culpitt had been wounded during a previous operation and was still convalescing. Sergeant Gordon Peterson (the nominal Platoon Sergeant) stood in as Acting Platoon Commander during Operation Hump. Corporal Trevor Hagan stepped up to be Acting Platoon Sergeant and Parker took command of Hagan's Section.

<sup>5</sup> Breen, *First to Fight*, p. 119.

<sup>6</sup> NAA: AWM 95, 7/1/45.

<sup>7</sup> 1 RAR Op Order 16/65 dated 20 Nov. 1965, as contained in NAA: AWM 95, 7/1/39.

On 10 November, 1 RAR conducted a Court of Inquiry (COI) at Bien Hoa into the loss of Parker and Gillson.<sup>8</sup> The COI recorded the locations where the men were left as follows: Parker—GR YT 165 234; and, Gillson—GR YT 165 233 or 164 233.<sup>9</sup> Parker was listed as missing and for official purposes presumed dead and Gillson was recorded as KIA, body not recovered.<sup>10</sup>

The Australian Government Mission conducted in 1984 appears to have gained access to the general area of the Parker and Gillson loss incident but concluded 'investigation would have required a grid search over a large area through difficult terrain which was beyond the mission's capacity' and 'that further investigation would not produce results'.<sup>11</sup>

In April 2007, the remains of Parker and Gillson were located at GR YT 16843 23467, approximately 400 metres east by northeast of the officially recorded location.<sup>12</sup>

## **FISHER**

PTE David Fisher was a member of 3 SAS Squadron, a subordinate unit of 1 ATF based at Nui Dat. In late September 1969, PTE Fisher was Second-in-Command of a 3 Squadron five-man patrol, Patrol No. 11, operating west of Nui May Tao, approximately 34 km northeast by north of Nui Dat. At 0835 hrs on the morning of 27 September, the patrol engaged eight enemy soldiers and killed at least four, and possibly another two. As the patrol withdrew, at about 0900 hrs they encountered approximately 20 to 30 more enemy 300 metres north of the initial engagement. The patrol successfully broke contact around 1030 hrs and requested immediate extraction, which was approved at 1115 hrs.<sup>13</sup> Shortly thereafter, the six utility helicopters tasked to carry out the extraction arrived on station: a command and control aircraft, the winch aircraft, three gunships, plus a backup helicopter fitted with a winch. The crew of the winch aircraft

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<sup>8</sup> Lander and Ducie, 'Court of Inquiry into Soldiers Missing in Action in the Republic of Vietnam 8 November 65'.

<sup>9</sup> 29th Engineer Battalion US Army, 'Map, Vietnam, Tan Uyen, Series L7014, Sheet 6331 II, 1:50,000'.

<sup>10</sup> Lander and Ducie, 'Court of Inquiry into Soldiers Missing in Action in the Republic of Vietnam 8 November 65'.

<sup>11</sup> Holloway et alia, 'Report of the Mission of Investigation into Cases of Australian Servicemen Believed Killed in Action in Vietnam whose Bodies have not been Recovered: 9-23 May 1984', p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> 29th Engineer Battalion US Army, 'Map, Vietnam, Tan Uyen, Series L7014, Sheet 6331 II, 1:50,000'.

<sup>13</sup> NAA: AWM 95, 7/12/17.

lowered five ropes through the jungle canopy and the five men attached themselves to the ropes so they could be lifted out and transported to a suitable LZ, while suspended beneath the helicopter.<sup>14</sup> Patrol 11 was not in contact with the opposing force at the time of lift out, having disengaged from the enemy some 45 minutes earlier.<sup>15</sup> During the subsequent flight, at approximately 1125 hrs PTE Fisher was seen to fall from his rope from a height of approximately 90 feet.<sup>16</sup>

All aircraft proceeded to the planned emplaning LZ approximately 3,000 metres west of where the patrol was picked up, and the remaining four patrol members boarded the aircraft from which they had been suspended. There was an assessed possibility, but only a very slight one, that Fisher may not have died and on that basis searching proceeded rapidly. All aircraft had enough fuel to return to the area where it was thought Fisher fell and the persons on board searched for Fisher for about 15 minutes. A further aerial search was conducted from 1345 hrs until 1500 hrs, and likely areas were progressively searched over the next six days, initially by a nine-man SAS patrol over 26 hours, and sequentially by two infantry companies. No trace was found of Fisher.<sup>17</sup>

A COI concerning the loss of PTE Fisher was held at Vung Tau from 30 September to 5 October.<sup>18</sup> The officially recorded location where Fisher was thought to have fallen was GR YS 633 957.<sup>19</sup> The authorities listed Fisher as MIA, for official purposes presumed dead.

The Vietnamese escorting the Australian Government Mission in 1984 did not allow unfettered access to the area of the loss incident, specifically the area to the north of the recorded location of Fisher's impact.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Spry, Reid and Robertson, 'Court of Inquiry 2787344 Pte D. J. E. Fisher—3 SAS Squadron: Reported Missing-in-Action in the vicinity of YS 633957 at approximately 1130 hrs on 27 Sep 69', Annex G, p.3.

<sup>16</sup> NAA: AWM 95, 7/12/17.

<sup>17</sup> Spry, Reid and Robertson, 'Court of Inquiry 2787344 Pte D. J. E. Fisher—3 SAS Squadron: Reported Missing-in-Action in the vicinity of YS 633957 at approximately 1130 hrs on 27 Sep 69'.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., referencing 29th Engineer Battalion US Army, 'Map, Vietnam, Xa Cam My, Series L7014, Sheet 6430 I, 1:50,000'.

In August 2008, Fisher's remains were located at GR YS 62381 95877, which was approximately 940 metres northwest by west of the officially recorded location.<sup>20</sup>

## **HERBERT AND CARVER**

During the Vietnam War, No. 2 Squadron RAAF operated from Phan Rang Airbase, under the operational control of the US 35<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Wing. On the night of 3 November 1970, FLGOFF Michael Herbert and PLTOFF Robert Carver of 2 Squadron were crewing a Mk 20 Canberra Bomber, Tail No. A84-231. The aircraft's radio call sign was 'Magpie 91'. The aircraft was tasked to carry out a nighttime bombing mission, Mission No. 6115, against a classified target located at GR YC 680 453, approximately 17 km from the Laotian border and 88 km southwest of Da Nang.<sup>21</sup> Based on the receipt of signals intelligence, the Divisional Air Support Centre operating from the 1<sup>st</sup> ARVN Division's HQ at Hue arranged this mission as a pre-planned Ground Directed Bombing mission. The Target No. was 6736S, with the suffix 'S' indicating a target classified as 'secret'.<sup>22</sup> The Ground Controller for the mission was Captain Bill Hanig, US Air Force, who was operating from Phu Bai airfield, south of Hue.

The mission's initial stages were uneventful—nothing beyond that which the aircraft's crew and Hanig could manage. After Carver released the aircraft's payload of six 750 lb bombs, Herbert turned the aircraft onto a heading of 120 degrees magnetic in preparation for the return journey to Phan Rang. A primary search radar, located at Monkey Mountain near Da Nang was tracking A84-231 and the data was being fed to a remote site, (Motel Alpha) in Thailand. Radar contact was lost at 2022 hrs. The LKP of A84-231, as reported by Motel Alpha was 15 degrees 45 minutes north and 107 degrees 40 minutes east.<sup>23</sup> No MAYDAY call was received from A84-231.

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<sup>20</sup> 29th Engineer Battalion US Army, 'Map, Vietnam, Xa Cam My, Series L7014, Sheet 6430 I, 1:50,000'.

<sup>21</sup> AMS (LU) US Army, 'Map, Vietnam, Muang Bac, Series TL 7014, Sheet 6540 III (1965) 1:50,000'; and, AMS (LU) US Army, 'Map, Vietnam, Atiun, Series TL 7014, Sheet 6540 IV (1965) 1:50,000'.

<sup>22</sup> The details of intelligence gained by the use of electronic warfare measures were classified in order to conceal the nature of the intelligence gathering process. The target was in fact the BT44 Military Command Unit and the use of a 15-watt transmitter radio by the Vietnamese HQ some days before 3 Nov. 1970 revealed their position to the Americans. Powell, 'The Hunt for Magpie 91', p. 17.

<sup>23</sup> AMS (LU) US Army, 'Map, Vietnam, Muang Bac, Series TL 7014, Sheet 6540 III (1965) 1:50,000' and AMS (LU) US Army, 'Map, Vietnam, Atiun, Series TL 7014, Sheet 6540 IV (1965) 1:50,000'.



On the basis Herbert and/or Carver may have ejected from the aircraft, Australian and US aircraft conducted searches over the next three days, flying 67 sorties, 38 flown by 2 Squadron and the balance by American units. No signs of A84-231 were found and no signals were detected from the men's survival radios.<sup>24</sup> The men each carried two radio sets, stowed in their survival vests: a PRC-90 Radio/Beacon and an RT-10 Radio/Beacon. Both sets had a beacon and voice capability. In addition, no signals were picked up from the AN-URT-27 devices, which activated on the parachute's deployment.<sup>25</sup>

A COI into the incident concerning Herbert and Carver was held at Phan Rang in November.<sup>26</sup> The COI accepted the LKP recorded for the aircraft as 15 degrees 45 minutes north and 107 degrees 40 minutes east.<sup>27</sup> Herbert and Carver were listed as missing and eventually, in 1975 their classification was changed to 'Missing believed dead'.<sup>28</sup>

The Australian Government Mission conducted in 1984 did not approach closer than 28 km to the LKP of A84-231. They visited one area some 38 km northeast of the LKP, but the threat from unexploded ordnance precluded a closer site examination. The Mission also visited the village of Hoa Huu, approximately 28 km northeast of the LKP.<sup>29</sup>

The crash site of A84-231 was located in April 2009 at GR YC 82211 38420, which was approximately 5,870 metres southwest of the officially recorded LKP.<sup>30</sup> The remains of Herbert and Carver were recovered from the crash site in July 2009.

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<sup>24</sup> Coulthard-Clark, *The RAAF in Vietnam: Australian Air Involvement in the Vietnam War 1962-1975*, p. 207.

<sup>25</sup> Royal Australian Air Force, 'Australian Air Publication 966: Flight Manual Canberra Mk 20', 1<sup>st</sup> edn, Canberra, ACT, 1970.

<sup>26</sup> B. E. O'Shea, G. M. Bickle and A. J. Pinches, 'Court of Inquiry to inquire into and report on the circumstances surrounding the loss of Canberra aircraft A84-231 on 3 November 1970', Phan Rang, Vietnam, No. 2 Squadron RAAF.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> J. C. Jordan, 'Presumption of Death of FLGOFF Michael Herbert', [letter to Mr John Herbert], 9 Sept. 1975, Canberra, ACT, as contained in NAA: A703, 660/7/44310 Part 1; and, J. C. Jordan, 'Presumption of Death of PLTOFF Robert Carver', [letter to Mr Syd Carver], 9 Sept. 1975, Canberra, ACT, as contained in NAA: A703, 660/7/119223 Part 1.

<sup>29</sup> Holloway et alia, 'Report of the Mission of Investigation into Cases of Australian Servicemen Believed Killed in Action in Vietnam whose Bodies have not been Recovered: 9-23 May 1984', Attachment A, pp. 4-5.

<sup>30</sup> AMS (LU) US Army, 'Map, Vietnam, Muang Bac, Series TL 7014, Sheet 6540 III (1965) 1:50,000' and AMS (LU) US Army, 'Map, Vietnam, Atiun, Series TL 7014, Sheet 6540 IV (1965) 1:50,000'.

## GILLESPIE

LCPL John Gillespie was a member of 8 Field Ambulance, which was a subordinate unit of 1 ATF based at Nui Dat. During Operation Dong Khoi III, on 17 April 1971 LCPL Gillespie was on board a UH-1H helicopter of 9 Squadron RAAF, Tail No. A2-767. The crew were carrying out a combat aero-medical evacuation in the Long Hai Hills, approximately 17 km southeast by south of Nui Dat. At about 1620 hrs, as the crew were winching a wounded Vietnamese into the hovering helicopter the enemy successfully engaged the aircraft, and it crashed onto its starboard side, before catching on fire. The falling helicopter killed two men on the ground, CPL Tom Blackhurst and an American officer, Captain Bernard Albertson, and Gillespie was pinned under the wreckage.

Despite a valiant attempt by CPL Robert Stephens, a crewmember on A2-767, Gillespie could not be extracted from the burning helicopter.<sup>31</sup> The RAAF crew managed to extricate themselves from the burning helicopter and the crew and some critically wounded Vietnamese soldiers were extracted by helicopter around last light.<sup>32</sup> The ARVN soldier who was being evacuated when the helicopter was shot down survived and was evacuated to 1 Aust Field Hospital at Vung Tau.<sup>33</sup>

The next day friendly forces recovered the bodies of Blackhurst and Albertson, but the heat from the wreckage was still so intense that the recovery party could not approach the smouldering aircraft any closer than four feet. Any further post-combat efforts to recover remains that may have survived the fire would have been extremely hazardous because of the enemy's extensive use of mines, and therefore no Australian forces made any such efforts.<sup>34</sup>

It does not appear a COI was assembled to investigate the loss of Gillespie, although it is alleged the case was investigated and details recorded in an 8 Field Ambulance file, which was passed to CARO when 8 Field Ambulance was

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<sup>31</sup> Lockhart, *The Minefield: An Australian Tragedy in Vietnam*, p. 233; and, McNeill, *The Team: Australian Army Advisers in Vietnam 1962-1972*, p. 455.

<sup>32</sup> Coulthard-Clark, *The RAAF in Vietnam: Australian Air Involvement in the Vietnam War 1962-1975*, pp. 154-5; and, Lockhart, *The Minefield: An Australian Tragedy in Vietnam*, p. 233.

<sup>33</sup> S. Ford, 'Advice that the ARVN soldier involved in the Gillespie incident was not killed', [e-mail to J. Bourke], 6 Oct. 2007, Beaumaris, Vic.

<sup>34</sup> Headquarters Aust Force Vietnam, 'Remains 3170244 Lance Corporal J. F. Gillespie (Deceased)', as contained in NAA: B2458, 3170244.

disbanded.<sup>35</sup> It is likely the authorities employed the less formal method of investigation by the appointment of an Investigating Officer, as opposed to assembling a COI. Gillespie's personnel file contains statements by the four RAAF crewmembers of A2-767 and a statement by Warrant Officer Maher who attended the crash site on 17 and 18 April, supporting the argument the appropriate authority appointed an Investigating Officer rather than convening a COI.<sup>36</sup>

The officially recorded location for the Gillespie loss incident was GR YS 476 507.<sup>37</sup> Gillespie was officially listed as KIA, body not recovered.

The closest the Australian Government Mission of 1984 came to the Gillespie loss incident site was 4.6 km, although they claimed to have been closer. As reported, 'The mission visited a point about three kilometres from the known site of the helicopter crash in which LCPL Gillespie was involved. It was prevented [from] going closer by military authorities as area [sic] remains heavily mined and is apparently inhabited by "bandits"'.<sup>38</sup>

The crash site of A2-767 was located in February 2004 at GR YS 47601 5088, approximately 180 metres north of the officially recorded location.<sup>39</sup> The remains of Gillespie were recovered from the crash site in November 2007.

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<sup>35</sup> Mackinlay, 'The Gillespie case and an alleged visit to the crash site on 22 June 1971'.

<sup>36</sup> NAA: B2458, 3170244.

<sup>37</sup> AMS (VP) US Army, 'Map, Vietnam, Dat Do, Series L7014, Sheet 6429 I, 1:50,000'.

<sup>38</sup> Holloway et alia, 'Report of the Mission of Investigation into Cases of Australian Servicemen Believed Killed in Action in Vietnam whose Bodies have not been Recovered: 9-23 May 1984', p. 3.

<sup>39</sup> AMS (VP) US Army, 'Map, Vietnam, Dat Do, Series L7014, Sheet 6429 I, 1:50,000'.

## STRUCTURES OF THE SIX AFFECTED FAMILIES

### ***PREAMBLE***

Some information presented in Appendix A is necessarily repeated in this Appendix, which groups individuals into their family units, for the reader's convenience.

A number of discrete family units constitute the 'families' of the Forgotten Six. This appendix describes the composition of these 'families' by reference to their component family units, which are the decedents' birth families; and, where the decedent was married, the decedents' conjugal families, the widows' birth families, and the subsequent conjugal families of the widows.

This appendix provides snapshots of the families at the time of the loss incidents involving the six men, and in 2002, when OAH entered the field. This appendix includes basic biographical detail for family members not included in prosopographies presented at Appendix A.

The enclosed tables use the individual's family name as of 2014. The person's full given name or names are included, where known. In some cases, the names by which the individuals were known were not their first given name and, in such cases the name generally used is shown in brackets. Questionnaires completed by participants and various sources from within the public domain provided the data for this appendix.

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## ***PARKER: 1965-2002***

### **The Decedent's Birth Family**

Table C-1 shows the composition of Parker's birth family from 1965 to 2002.

***Table C-1: Parker's Birth Family: 1965-2002***

<b>FAMILY MEMBER</b>	<b>YEAR OF BIRTH</b>	<b>AGE IN 1965 (YEAR OF THE LOSS)</b>	<b>YEAR OF DEATH IF BEFORE 2002</b>	<b>RELATIONSHIP TO DECEDENT</b>
Harold Heath	1910	55	1966 <sup>1</sup>	Father
Eva Irene Heath (nee Hills)	1916	49	Not known	Mother
Eugene John Brew <sup>2</sup>	1908	Deceased	1961	Stepfather (1948-51)
Patricia Woodland (nee Heath)	1934	31		Elder sister

*(Continued)*

<sup>1</sup> Register of Births Deaths and Marriages, 'Registration Number 1966/026515: Death of Harold Heath', Sydney, NSW, 1966.

<sup>2</sup> Eugene Brew and Eva Heath were married on 19 Mar. 1948. However, the marriage was dissolved on 13 Dec. 1951. The circumstances under which the marriage fractured revolved around improper behaviour of Brew; however, this study does not elaborate on Brew's behaviour, in the interests of maintaining the privacy of certain individuals and because such behaviour is not overly relevant in the context of this study.

Richard Harold John Heath (AKA Richard Harold John Parker)	1941	24	1965	Decedent
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### **Widow's Birth Family**

From evidence available in the public domain, the birth family of Parker's widow, Wendy Kathleen Mudford (nee Parker, nee Budge) consisted of the mother, the father and at least two children. Based on the best available evidence, I deduced Mudford was born in October 1940.

### **The Decedent's Conjugal Family**

Richard Parker and Wendy Budge were married on 29 September 1962. At the time of Parker's loss in November 1965, the couple had no children.

### **The Widow's Conjugal Family from 1984 onwards**

Parker's widow married Don Mudford on 13 February 1984, more than 18 years after her first husband went missing.

### ***PARKER: 2002-12***

### **The Decedent's Birth Family**

By 2002, the only surviving member of Parker's birth family was his sister, Patricia Woodland, aged 68. Hilton Woodland, Pat's husband of 43 years, died in 1997.

### **The Widow's Conjugal Family**

Table C-2 shows the composition of the conjugal family of Parker's widow from 2002 to 2012.

***Table C-2: The Conjugal Family of Parker's Widow: 2002-12***

<b>FAMILY MEMBER</b>	<b>YEAR OF BIRTH</b>	<b>AGE IN 2002</b>	<b>YEAR OF DEATH IF BEFORE 2012</b>	<b>RELATIONSHIP TO DECEDENT</b>
Wendy Kathleen Mudford (nee Parker, nee Budge)	1940	62		Widow
Don Mudford	Before 1940	Older than 62		Second husband of the decedent's widow

**GILLSON: 1965–2002****The Decedent's Birth Family**

Table C-3 shows the composition of Gillson's birth family from 1965 to 2002.

**Table C-3: Gillson's Birth Family: 1965–2002**

<b>FAMILY MEMBER</b>	<b>YEAR OF BIRTH</b>	<b>AGE IN 1965 (YEAR OF THE LOSS)</b>	<b>YEAR OF DEATH IF BEFORE 2002</b>	<b>RELATIONSHIP TO DECEDENT</b>
Leslie Vernon Gillson (Les)	1912	53	1976	Father
Edith Joyce Gillson (nee Bassett)	1919	46	1990	Mother
Graeme Gillson	1941	24		Elder brother
Robert Gillson Snr	1943	22		Elder brother
Peter Raymond Gillson	1945	20	1965	Decedent
Kevin Gillson	1949	16		Younger brother
Lorraine Barbara Wotherspoon (nee Gillson)	1952	13		Younger sister

**The Widow's Birth Family**

Table C-4 shows the composition of the widow's birth family from 1965 to 2002.

**Table C-4: The Birth Family of Gillson's Widow: 1965–2002**

<b>FAMILY MEMBER</b>	<b>YEAR OF BIRTH</b>	<b>AGE IN 1965 (YEAR OF THE LOSS)</b>	<b>YEAR OF DEATH IF BEFORE 2002</b>	<b>RELATIONSHIP TO DECEDENT</b>
Douglas Easton	1919	46	1980	Father-in-Law
Esther Easton (nee Weldon)	1925	40	1994	Mother-in-Law
Mark Easton	Not known		2000	Brother-in-Law
Paul Easton	Not known		Not known	Brother-in-Law
Lynette Cunningham (nee Easton)	1945	20		Sister-in-Law

(Continued)

Lorraine Kay Easton (nee Hawes, nee Gillson, nee Easton)	1947	18	Widow
Robyn Bak (nee Easton)	1948	17	Sister-in-Law

### The Decedent's Conjugal Family

Peter Gillson and Lorraine Easton were married on 9 January 1965 when Easton was 17 old. Table C-5 shows the composition of the decedent's conjugal family in 1965.

**Table C-5: Gillson's Conjugal Family in 1965**

FAMILY MEMBER	YEAR OF BIRTH	AGE IN 1965 (YEAR OF THE LOSS)	YEAR OF DEATH IF BEFORE 2002	RELATIONSHIP TO DECEDENT
Peter Raymond Gillson	1945	20	1965	Decedent
Lorraine Kay Easton (nee Gillson, nee Easton)	1947	18		Widow
Robert Gillson Jr	1965	4 months		Son of the widow and the decedent

### The Widow's Conjugal Family from 1967 onwards

Table C-6 shows the composition of the conjugal family of Gillson's widow from 1967 to 2002.

**Table C-6: The Conjugal Family of Gillson's Widow: 1967-2002**

FAMILY MEMBER	YEAR OF BIRTH	AGE IN 2002	YEAR OF DEATH IF BEFORE 2012	RELATIONSHIP TO DECEDENT
Lorraine Kay Easton (nee Hawes, nee Gillson, nee Easton)	1947	55		Widow
Robert Hawes/Gillson	1965	37		Son of the widow and the decedent
John Hawes	Not Known	Not Known		Second husband of the decedent's widow
Craig Hawes	1967	35		Son of the widow and her second husband



Gillson's widow married John Hawes on 16 June 1967 and they had a son, Craig. The couple were divorced on 10 December 1986.

Robert Gillson Jr, the son of Peter Gillson and Lorraine Easton, carried the name of Robert Hawes up until he was about 12 years old, which would have been around 1979. Thereafter he reverted to using his birth name.

### ***GILLSON: 2002–12***

#### **The Decedent's Birth Family**

Table C-7 shows the composition of Gillson's birth family from 2002 to 2012.

***Table C-7: Gillson's Birth Family: 2002–12***

<b>FAMILY MEMBER</b>	<b>YEAR OF BIRTH</b>	<b>AGE IN 2002</b>	<b>YEAR OF DEATH IF BEFORE 2012</b>	<b>RELATIONSHIP TO DECEDENT</b>
Graeme Gillson	1941	61		Elder brother
Robert Gillson Snr	1945	57		Elder brother
Kevin Gillson	1949	53		Younger brother
Lorraine Barbara Wotherspoon (nee Gillson)	1952	50		Younger sister

#### **The Widow's Birth Family**

Table C-8 shows the composition of the widow's birth family from 2002 to 2012.

***Table C-8: The Birth Family of Gillson's Widow: 2002–12***

<b>FAMILY MEMBER</b>	<b>YEAR OF BIRTH</b>	<b>AGE IN 2002</b>	<b>YEAR OF DEATH IF BEFORE 2012</b>	<b>RELATIONSHIP TO DECEDENT</b>
Lynette Cunningham (nee Easton)	1945	57		Sister-in-Law
Lorraine Kay Easton (nee Hawes, nee Gillson, nee Easton) AKA Lorraine Chevalier	1947	55		Widow
Robyn Bak (nee Easton)	1948	54		Sister-in-Law

### The Widow's Conjugal Family

Table C-9 shows the composition of the conjugal family of Gillson's widow from 2002 to 2012.

**Table C-9: The Conjugal Family of Gillson's Widow: 2002-12**

FAMILY MEMBER	YEAR OF BIRTH	AGE IN 2002	YEAR OF DEATH IF BEFORE 2012	RELATIONSHIP TO DECEDENT
Lorraine Kay Easton (nee Hawes, nee Gillson, nee Easton) AKA Lorraine Chevalier	1947	55		Widow
Robert Gillson Jr	1965	37		Son of the widow and the decedent
Craig Hawes	1967	35		Son of the widow and her second husband

After being divorced from John Hawes, Gillson's widow had a relationship with a man named Chevalier. The time at which this relationship began is not known; however, the widow was using the 'Chevalier' name in correspondence during 2002 to 2005. However, the widow reverted to her original maiden name (Easton) in 2007 when she needed a passport to go to Hanoi for the repatriation of Gillson's remains.

### ***FISHER: 1969-2002***

#### The Decedent's Birth Family

Table C-10 shows the composition of Fisher's birth family from 1969 to 2002.

**Table C-10: Fisher's Birth Family: 1969-2002**

FAMILY MEMBER	YEAR OF BIRTH	AGE IN 1969 (YEAR OF THE LOSS)	YEAR OF DEATH IF BEFORE 2002	RELATIONSHIP TO DECEDENT
William Alfred Fisher	1915	54	1978	Father
Winifred Mary Thornitt Fisher (nee Elkington)	Late 1915 or early 1916	Deceased	1954	Mother
Ann Winifred Margaret Cowdroy (nee Fisher)	1942	26		Elder sister

(Continued)

David John Elkington Fisher	1946	23	1969	Decedent
Margaret Mary Fisher (nee Tomkinson nee Hunter)	1928 approx.	41 approx.		Stepmother
Julia Tomkinson	Before 1956	Older than 13		Stepsister
Penelope Fisher	1961 approx.	8 approx.		Half-sister

Fisher's birth mother sadly died in 1954, aged 38. Fisher's father, William married Margaret Tomkinson in 1956. Margaret already had one daughter, Julia Tomkinson. Penelope was born to William and Margaret Fisher around 1961.

### ***FISHER: 2002–12***

#### **The Decedent's Birth Family**

Table C–11 shows the composition of Fisher's birth family from 2002 to 2012.

***Table C–11: Fisher's Birth Family: 2002–12***

<b>FAMILY MEMBER</b>	<b>YEAR OF BIRTH</b>	<b>AGE IN 2002</b>	<b>YEAR OF DEATH IF BEFORE 2012</b>	<b>RELATIONSHIP TO DECEDENT</b>
Ann Winifred Margaret Cowdroy (nee Fisher)	1942	60		Elder sister
Margaret Mary Fisher (nee Tomkinson nee Hunter)	1928 approx.	74		Stepmother
Julia Tomkinson	Before 1956	Older than 46		Stepsister
Penelope Fisher	1961 approx.	41 approx.		Half-sister

**HERBERT: 1970–2002****The Decedent's Birth Family**

Table C-12 shows the composition of Herbert's birth family from 1970 to 2002.

**Table C-12: Herbert's Birth Family: 1970–2002**

FAMILY MEMBER	YEAR OF BIRTH	AGE IN 1970 (YEAR OF THE LOSS)	YEAR OF DEATH IF BEFORE 2002	RELATIONSHIP TO DECEDENT
John Patrick Joseph Herbert	1923	47		Father
Joan Patricia Herbert (nee Skehan)	1920	50		Mother
Michael John Patrick Herbert	1946	24		Decedent
Kerry Herbert AKA Kerryn Herbert (Kerryn)	Around 1952 to 1954	17 approx.		Younger sister
Shane Herbert	1959	11		Younger brother

**HERBERT: 2002–12****The Decedent's Birth Family**

Table C-13 shows the composition of Herbert's birth family from 2002 to 2012.

**Table C-13: Herbert's Birth Family: 2002–12**

FAMILY MEMBER	YEAR OF BIRTH	AGE IN 2002	YEAR OF DEATH IF BEFORE 2012	RELATIONSHIP TO DECEDENT
John Patrick Joseph Herbert	1923	79	2009 <sup>3</sup>	Father
Joan Patricia Herbert (nee Skehan)	1920	82	2003	Mother
Kerry Herbert (Kerryn)	Around 1952 to 1954	49 approx.		Younger brother
Shane Herbert	1959	43		Younger sister

<sup>3</sup> John Herbert died on 25 Sept. 2009, slightly less than three weeks after his son's funeral.

**CARVER: 1970–2002****The Decedent's Birth Family**

Table C–14 shows the composition of Carver's birth family from 1970 to 2002.

**Table C–14: Carver's Birth Family: 1970–2002**

FAMILY MEMBER	YEAR OF BIRTH	AGE IN 1970 (YEAR OF THE LOSS)	YEAR OF DEATH IF BEFORE 2002	RELATIONSHIP TO DECEDENT
Sydney William Carver (Syd)	1910	60	1996	Father
Shelagh Edna Carver (Edna)	1911	59	1997	Mother
William John Carver (Bill)	1938	32		Elder brother
Robert Charles Carver	1946	24	1970	Decedent

**CARVER: THE 2002–12****The Decedent's Birth Family**

By 2002, the only surviving member of Carver's birth family was his elder brother, William (Bill). Bill Carver married Susanna (Anna) Toal in 1973, after she migrated from Ireland in 1972. Therefore, Anna Carver did not meet the Carver family until approximately three years after Robert Carver was lost. Anna and Bill Carver had a son, Adam, who was born in 1979. In 2002, Bill Carver was aged 74.<sup>4</sup>

**GILLESPIE: 1971–2002****The Decedent's Birth Family**

Table C–15 shows the composition of Gillespie's birth family from 1971 to 2002.

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<sup>4</sup> Bill Carver died on 23 Dec. 2009, just under four months after his brother's funeral.

**Table C-15: Gillespie's Birth Family: 1971-2002**

<b>FAMILY MEMBER</b>	<b>YEAR OF BIRTH</b>	<b>AGE IN 1971 (YEAR OF THE LOSS)</b>	<b>YEAR OF DEATH IF BEFORE 2002</b>	<b>RELATIONSHIP TO DECEDENT</b>
Francis Mahon Gillespie (Frank)	1914	56	1982	Father
Moya Gillespie (nee Lalor)	1918	Deceased	1965	Mother
Christine Mary Gillespie	1944	26		Elder sister
John Francis Gillespie	1947	24	1971	Decedent
Michael Gillespie	1948	23	1992	Younger brother
Paul Gillespie	1950	21		Younger brother
Frances Gillespie	1952	19		Younger sister
Fiona Gillespie	1957	14		Younger sister

### **The Widow's Birth Family**

Table C-16 shows the composition of the widow's birth family from 1971 to 2002.

**Table C-16: The Birth Family of Gillespie's Widow: 1971-2002**

<b>FAMILY MEMBER</b>	<b>YEAR OF BIRTH</b>	<b>AGE IN 1971 (YEAR OF THE LOSS)</b>	<b>YEAR OF DEATH IF BEFORE 2002</b>	<b>RELATIONSHIP TO DECEDENT</b>
John O'Sullivan	1905	66	1978	Father-in-Law
Eileen O'Sullivan (nee Smith)	1915	56		Mother-in-Law
Terence O'Sullivan	1943	28	1990	Brother-in-Law
Carmel Hendrie (nee Gillespie, nee O'Sullivan)	1949	22		Widow
Bernadette Braental nee O'Sullivan)	1950	21		Sister-in-Law
Moirra Therese Vella (Therese ) (nee O'Sullivan)	1951	20		Sister-in-Law
Frances Mellor (nee O'Sullivan)	1953	18		Sister-in-Law
Brian O'Sullivan	1955	16		Brother-in-Law

### The Decedent's Conjugal Family

John Gillespie and Carmel O'Sullivan were married on 27 May 1967. Table C–17 shows the composition of the decedent's conjugal family in 1971.

**Table C–17: Gillespie's Conjugal Family in 1971**

FAMILY MEMBER	YEAR OF BIRTH	AGE IN 1971 (YEAR OF THE LOSS)	YEAR OF DEATH IF BEFORE 2002	RELATIONSHIP TO DECEDENT
John Francis Gillespie	1947	24	1971	Decedent
Carmel Hendrie (nee O'Sullivan)	1949	22		Widow
Fiona Pike (originally nee Gillespie)	1969	2 years and 2 months		Daughter

### The Widow's Conjugal Family

In the early seventies, Gillespie's widow developed a relationship with Ron Hendrie and this relationship persisted.

### **GILLESPIE: 2002–12**

### The Decedent's Birth Family

Table C–18 shows the composition of Gillespie's birth family from 2002 to 2012.

**Table C–18: Gillespie's Birth Family: 2002–12**

FAMILY MEMBER	YEAR OF BIRTH	AGE IN 2002	YEAR OF DEATH IF BEFORE 2012	RELATIONSHIP TO DECEDENT
Christine Mary Gillespie	1944	58		Elder sister
Paul Gillespie	1950	52	2010	Younger brother
Frances Gillespie	1952	50		Younger sister
Fiona Gillespie	1957	45	2009	Younger sister

### The Widow's Birth Family

Table C-19 shows the composition of the widow's birth family from 2002 to 2012.

**Table C-19: The Birth Family of Gillespie's Widow: 2002-12**

FAMILY MEMBER	YEAR OF BIRTH	AGE IN 2002	YEAR OF DEATH IF BEFORE 2012	RELATIONSHIP TO DECEDENT
Eileen O'Sullivan (nee Smith)	1915	87	2008	Mother-in-Law
Carmel Hendrie (nee Gillespie, nee O'Sullivan)	1949	53		Widow
Bernadette Braental nee O'Sullivan)	1950	52		Sister-in-Law
Moir Therese Vella (nee O'Sullivan) (Therese )	1951	51		Sister-in-Law
Frances Mellor (nee O'Sullivan)	1953	49		Sister-in-Law
Brian O'Sullivan	1955	47		Brother-in-Law

### The Widow's Conjugal Family

Carmel and Ron Hendrie were eventually married in June 2006. Table C-20 shows the composition of the conjugal family of Gillespie's widow from 2002 to 2012.

**Table C-20: The Conjugal Family of Gillespie's Widow: 2002-12**

FAMILY MEMBER	YEAR OF BIRTH	AGE IN 2002	YEAR OF DEATH IF BEFORE 2012	RELATIONSHIP TO DECEDENT
Carmel Hendrie (nee Gillespie, nee O'Sullivan)	1949	53		Widow
Fiona Pike (originally nee Gillespie)	1969	33		Daughter
Ron Hendrie	1946	56		Second husband of the decedent's widow



## CASUALTY CLASSIFICATIONS OF THE SIX MEN

### ***PREAMBLE***

This appendix contains details of the casualty classifications of the men, including the release of the casualty information to the public, and the changes to the men's classifications through to 1975. The relevant authorities adjusted the classifications of all six men to KIA on the recovery of their remains (2007–09).<sup>1</sup>

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### ***CLASSIFYING CASUALTIES***

The lack of information sometimes precluded a definitive classifications being made, particularly where a body was not available. Adding a further dimension to this dilemma was the possibility the enemy may have taken some of the four men classified as MIA as prisoners.<sup>2</sup> Although one might not expect such a situation in military circles, a lack of precision in terminology complicated this issue even further. In particular, the generic classification of 'missing' was often used, even in official circles, to describe the status of the six unresolved cases from Vietnam. Furthermore, the degree of objectivity

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<sup>1</sup> Australian War Memorial, 'Search the Roll of Honour (Vietnam, 1962–1975)'.

<sup>2</sup> In 1973, Defence actually considered the possibility Parker, Fisher, Herbert and Carver might be POW. In Jan. 1973, during Operation Homecoming (the American operation to repatriate the POW from Vietnam), the Australian Department of Defence (Air Office) took action to arrange aircraft to repatriate Herbert and Carver, and perhaps Parker and Fisher should they be POW. The Special Assistant for Prisoners of War, US State Department, through the Australian Embassy in Washington subsequently advised 'the lists (of POW to be released) neither included the names of Flying Officers Herbert and Carver, Lance Corporal Parker and Private Fisher'. Australian Embassy, 'Vietnam: Prisoners of War', [cablegram 454 to the Prime Minister et alia], 27 Jan. 1973, Washington, DC, as contained in NAA: A703, 660/7/44310 Part 1.

associated with ascribing classifications ranged from: objective, through subjective to emotive.<sup>3</sup>

## ***PRESUMPTIONS OF DEATH***

There was the facility to issue a presumption of death where a member was missing and where there was sufficient information available to indicate death had occurred.<sup>4</sup> The presumption of death and the issue of a death certificate were essentially administrative matters and were required for example, for the finalisation of the deceased person's estate, and did not result in a change of official status of the casualty from MIA to KIA. In the late sixties, there was some confusion as to who had the authority to issue a presumption of death and this matter came to a head in 1969 in relation to the Fisher case.<sup>5</sup>

The appropriate authorities issued presumptions of death reasonably quickly for Parker, Gillson, Fisher and Gillespie. However, it was almost five years before they issued presumptions of death for Herbert and Carver. Such a delay is hard to justify. The COI that 2 Squadron conducted was thorough and indicated it was highly unlikely Herbert and/or Carver ejected from the aircraft, because during the three days of searching none of the search aircraft detected any signals from the six survival radios/beacons that were available. Furthermore, the non-return of any of the men in 1973 during Operation Homecoming strongly indicated Herbert and Carver were dead.

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<sup>3</sup> The enemy did not play any direct part in Fisher's death so why was he not classified as 'killed accidentally'? The COI that investigated the Fisher loss incident found 'Pte Fisher fell from his rope because he had hooked into the wrong loop, which was not strong enough to hold his weight in flight'. Spry, Reid and Robertson, 'Court of Inquiry 2787344 Pte D. J. E. Fisher—3 SAS Squadron: Reported Missing-in-Action in the vicinity of YS 633957 at approximately 1130 hrs on 27 Sep 69', p. 6. Gillespie is another interesting case but not as clear-cut as Fisher. CPL Bob Stephens, who was closely involved in the Gillespie loss incident, was awarded the British Empire Medal for gallantry for attempting to extricate Gillespie from the burning helicopter. Coulthard-Clark, *The RAAF in Vietnam: Australian Air Involvement in the Vietnam War 1962–1975*, p. 155. This award is made for acts of bravery *not* in the face of the enemy. This is seen as anomalous because Gillespie was accepted as KIA in 1971. If this incident did not occur 'in the face of the enemy', then Gillespie should have been recorded as 'killed accidentally', because he was either thrown from the helicopter on impact or attempted to exit the aircraft before it came to rest.

<sup>4</sup> Attorney-General's Department, 'Defence (Certification of Deaths) Regulations 1953'.

<sup>5</sup> At that time, the Defence (Certification of Death) Regulations gave the authority to issue a presumption of death to the Minister of State for the Army (or his delegate). Therefore, with Army casualties, the classification of 'Missing, presumed Dead' was not available to commanders when reporting casualty classifications, even though the relevant Military Board Instruction (MBI 38–1) listed it as an available classification. NAA: A6913, 1. This point was made clear by the Director of Army Records in Nov. 1969. B. S. Savage, 'Casualties—Service recording and advice to Next-of-Kin'; [memo to Army HQ, DAR 533/69], 26 Nov. 1969, Melbourne, Vic., as contained in NAA: B2458, 2787344.

The delay in issuing presumptions of death for Herbert and Carver was unjustified and contributed to the survivors' anguish, especially within the men's families.

### ***RELATIVE CASUALTY FIGURES OF UNITS***

To provide context to the impact of the loss of these six men on the units with which they were serving at the time of their deaths, the following provides details of overall casualties suffered by the units in which the six men served.<sup>6</sup> During the first tour of 1 RAR in Vietnam (1965–66), 26 men lost their lives. Another 27 were lost during the Battalion's second tour (1968–69). Overall, 324 infantrymen died directly because of their service in Vietnam. The SAS Regiment had only one member classified as KIA—Fisher; one Died-of-Wounds in Australia (Russell James Copeman); three were classified as 'Accidentally Killed'; and two are recorded as having 'Died of Illness'. Besides Fisher, Copeman was the only other casualty suffered by 3 SAS Squadron, the Squadron in which Fisher was serving at the time of his death. The deaths by illness and accident occurred in 1 Squadron and 2 Squadron. In 8 Field Ambulance two men were KIA, one of whom was Gillespie. Seven men died in 2 Squadron RAAF but Herbert and Carver were the only two classified (eventually) as KIA. Three others were accidentally killed and two died of illness.

### ***TIME ZONES***

To assist in appreciating the timings around the casualty notifications, the following explains the relevant time zones used during the Vietnam War. Time Zone ZULU was equivalent to GMT (now referred to Coordinated Universal Time). The time zone used in the eastern states of Australia was Eastern Standard Time (Time Zone KILO), which was 10 hours ahead of GMT. For Adelaide, Central Standard Time was nine hours 30 minutes ahead of GMT. In Vietnam, Time Zone HOTEL was used—eight hours ahead of GMT and two hours behind Eastern Standard.

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<sup>6</sup> Australian War Memorial, 'Search the Roll of Honour (Vietnam, 1962–1975)'.

**PARKER****Table D-1: Casualty Classifications of Parker**

DATE TIME	DAY OF THE WEEK	EVENT
8 Nov. 1965 at approx. 1620H (1820 EST)	Mon.	The incident that resulted in the loss of Parker and Gillson began.
9 Nov. at 1745 EST	Tues.	HQ Australian Force Vietnam (AFV) reported Parker as 'Missing in Action Presumed Killed 8 Nov 65'. <sup>7</sup>
10 Nov.	Wed.	Details of the loss incident made public in the <i>Herald</i> (Melbourne). The <i>Herald</i> article advised the details of the loss incident and that Gillson was 'missing, believed killed', but no mention was made of Parker, presumably because his widow, being in New Zealand, had not been advised at the time details were passed to the media. <sup>8</sup>
11 Nov.	Thurs.	Details of the loss incident made public in the <i>Sydney Morning Herald</i> which advised Gillson was 'missing, believed killed' but again no mention was made of Parker. <sup>9</sup>
11 Nov.	Thurs.	1 RAR conducted a COI into the loss of Parker and Gillson at Bien Hoa, Vietnam. The COI determined Parker was 'Missing-in-action presumed dead'. <sup>10</sup>
21 Apr. 1966		The Officer-in-Charge of CARO issued a Certificate of Death stating Parker 'Became missing . . . and is for official purposes presumed to be dead'.
6 Jan. 1978		CARO suggested the status of Fisher (and Parker) should be changed to KIA. <sup>11</sup>
17 Mar.		Based on legal advice, the change in classification suggested in Jan. was not approved. <sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> HQ Aust Force Vietnam, 'FATALCAS (Battle Casualties): PTE Gillson and LCPL Parker', [immediate message A 2153 of 090745Z Nov. 1965 to Army HQ], Saigon, Vietnam, as contained in NAA: B2458, 213963.

<sup>8</sup> Anon., 'Digger killed, three wounded', *Herald* (Melbourne), 10 Nov. 1965, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Anon., 'One Australian missing; four wounded', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 Nov. 1965, p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> Lander and Ducie, 'Court of Inquiry into Soldiers Missing in Action in the Republic of Vietnam 8 November 65'.

<sup>11</sup> M. H. Lander, 'Record of death ex 2787344 Pte D. J. E. Fisher [and Parker]'; [memo to Director of Personnel Employment, CARO Info Svc ex 2787344], 6 Jan. 1978, Melbourne, Vic., as contained in NAA: B2458, 2787344.

<sup>12</sup> Director of Personnel Employment, 'Casualties South Vietnam—Change of Status'; [memo to CARO, DPE 450/78], 17 March 1978, Canberra, ACT, as contained in NAA: B2458, 2787344.

**GILLSON****Table D-2: Casualty Classifications of Gillson**

DATE TIME	DAY OF THE WEEK	EVENT
8 Nov. 1965 at approx. 1620H (1820 EST)	Mon.	The incident that resulted in the loss of Parker and Gillson began.
9 Nov. at 090745Z (1745 EST)	Tues.	HQ AFV reported Gillson as 'Missing in Action Presumed Killed 8 Nov 65'. <sup>13</sup>
10 Nov. at 091516Z (100116 EST)	Tues.	HQ 1 RAR advised Army HQ and others in Australia that Lorraine Gillson, Gillson's widow had changed her address. Hence, the authorities would not have contacted Lorraine Gillson until, at the earliest, Wed. 10 Nov.
10 Nov. late in the afternoon	Wed.	Captain Ron Shambrook, the officer rostered to deliver casualty notifications in the Holsworthy area advised Gillson's widow of the loss of her husband. After he delivered the news to the widow, a chaplain arrived to lend support. Shambrook recalls the chaplain 'didn't understand the difference between "missing-in-action" and "missing-in-action believed killed"'. <sup>14</sup>
10 Nov.	Wed.	Details of the loss incident made public in the <i>Herald</i> (Melbourne), which advised Gillson was 'missing, believed killed'. <sup>15</sup> No mention was made of Parker.
11 Nov.	Thurs.	1 RAR conducted a COI into the loss of Parker and Gillson at Bien Hoa, Vietnam. The COI determined Gillson was 'Killed-in-Action'. <sup>16</sup>
8 Dec.		The Officer-in-Charge of CARO issued an initial Certificate of Death stating Gillson 'Killed on Active Service' on 8 Nov. 1965.
(Continued)		

<sup>13</sup> HQ Aust Force Vietnam, 'FATALCAS (Battle Casualties): PTE Gillson and LCPL Parker'.

<sup>14</sup> Shambrook, 'The loss and the recovery of MIA personnel from Vietnam (principally Peter Gillson)'.

<sup>15</sup> Anon., 'Digger killed, three wounded', p. 1.

<sup>16</sup> Lander and Ducie, 'Court of Inquiry into Soldiers Missing in Action in the Republic of Vietnam 8 November 65'.

Apr. 1966

In Apr. 1966, the Officer-in-Charge of CARO issued what appears to be the final Certificate of Death (No. 4813). CARO had previously sent a Death Certificate to 'Mrs L. K. Gillson' at her Fairfield Heights address on 17 Mar. 1966, but it apparently did not reach her. There is no record as to whether this final Certificate reached the widow.

## **FISHER**

**Table D-3: Casualty Classifications of Fisher**

DATE TIME	DAY OF THE WEEK	EVENT
27 Sept. 1969 at approx. 1125H (1325 EST)	Sat.	The loss incident resulting in Fisher death occurred.
27 Sept. at 1730H (1930 EST)	Sat.	HQ AFV reported Fisher as 'Missing'. <sup>17</sup>
28 Sept. at 0805 EST	Sun.	The local military authorities delivered advice to William Fisher that his son was missing. <sup>18</sup>
28 Sept. at 1240 EST	Sun.	William Fisher requested advice as to the height from which his son fell. <sup>19</sup>
28 Sept. at 1750 EST	Sun.	Advice was received that Fisher fell from 'a height of approx eighty to ninety feet'. <sup>20</sup>
1 Oct.	Wed.	Details of the loss of Fisher were made public in <i>Sydney Morning Herald</i> , noting he had been missing for three days. <sup>21</sup>
(Continued)		

<sup>17</sup> HQ Aust Force Vietnam, 'NOTICAS (Missing): PTE Fisher', [immediate message PA 16403 of 271030Z Sept. 1969 to Army HQ], Saigon, Vietnam, as contained in NAA: B2458, 2787344.

<sup>18</sup> HQ Second Military District, 'PTE Fisher's father advised of loss', [immediate message A 31301 of 272205Z Sept. 1969 to Army HQ], Sydney, NSW, as contained in NAA: B2458, 2787344.

<sup>19</sup> HQ Second Military District, 'Request by PTE Fisher's father for further information'.

<sup>20</sup> HQ Aust Force Vietnam, 'NOTICAS (Missing): Details regarding loss of PTE Fisher', [immediate message PS 16426 of 280750Z Sept. 1969 to Army HQ], Saigon, Vietnam, as contained in NAA: B2458, 2787344.

<sup>21</sup> Anon., 'Copter fall: soldier lost', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 Oct. 1969, p. 1.

13 Oct.	HQ AFV changed Fisher's status to 'Battle casualty, Missing and for official purposed presumed dead'. <sup>22</sup> This advice was delivered to William Fisher on 13 Oct. at 1630 EST.
26 Nov.	CARO subsequently overruled the presumption of death of 13 Oct. <sup>23</sup>
3 Dec.	The Officer-in-Charge of CARO eventually issued a Presumption of Death. <sup>24</sup>
6 Jan. 1978	CARO suggested the status of Fisher (and Parker) should be changed to KIA. <sup>25</sup> However, based on legal advice in Mar., these changes were not approved. <sup>26</sup>

## HERBERT

**Table D-4: Casualty Classifications of Herbert**

DATE TIME	DAY OF THE WEEK	EVENT
3 Nov. 1970 at 2022H (2222 EST)	Tues. (Melbourne Cup Day)	The incident that resulted in the loss of Herbert and Carver occurred.
4 Nov. at 031743Z (04 0343 EST)	Wed.	2 Squadron provided initial advice that Herbert and Carver were 'Missing'. <sup>27</sup>
4 Nov. at 1330 EST	Wed.	A local Chaplin notified John Herbert that his son was missing. <sup>28</sup>
5 Nov. (Continued)	Thurs.	Details of the loss incident made public in the <i>Advertiser</i> (Adelaide). <sup>29</sup>

<sup>22</sup> HQ Aust Force Vietnam, 'NOTICAS (Missing): Court of Inquiry (PTE Fisher)', [immediate message PA 27314 of 130325Z Oct. 1969 to Army HQ], Saigon, Vietnam, as contained in NAA: B2458, 2787344.

<sup>23</sup> B. S. Savage, 'Casualties—Service recording and advice to Next-of-Kin'.

<sup>24</sup> NAA: B2458, 2787344.

<sup>25</sup> M. H. Lander, 'Record of death ex 2787344 Pte D. J. E. Fisher'.

<sup>26</sup> Director of Personnel Employment, 'Casualties South Vietnam—Change of Status'.

<sup>27</sup> HQ 2 Squadron RAAF, 'Details of loss of A84-231 and crew (Herbert and Carver)', [immediate message A 109 of 031743Z Nov. 1970 (classified as SECRET) to Department of Air], Phan Rang, Vietnam, as contained in NAA: A703, 660/7/44310 Part 1.

<sup>28</sup> HQ RAAF Edinburgh, 'Notification of casualty to Mr John Herbert', [priority message M 365 of 040500Z Nov. 1970 to Department of Air and 2 Squadron RAAF], Edinburgh, SA, as contained in NAA: A703, 660/7/44310 Part 1.

<sup>29</sup> Anon., 'S.A. Pilot Missing', *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 5 Nov. 1970, p. 9.

5 Nov.	Thurs.	RAAF HQ Edinburgh sought information on the circumstances of the loss and details of the search for Herbert and Carver on behalf of John Herbert. <sup>30</sup>
17 Sept. 1975		Presumption of Death issued for Herbert indicating he was now 'Missing believed dead'. <sup>31</sup>

## CARVER

**Table D-5: Casualty Classifications of Carver**

DATE TIME	DAY OF THE WEEK	EVENT
3 Nov. 1970 at 2022H (2222 EST)	Tues. (Melbourne Cup Day)	The incident that resulted in the loss of Herbert and Carver occurred.
4 Nov. at 031743Z (040343 EST)	Wed.	2 Squadron provided initial advice that Herbert and Carver were 'Missing'. <sup>32</sup>
4 Nov. at 1045 EST	Wed.	Squadron Leader Leach notified Syd Carver that his son was missing. <sup>33</sup>
5 Nov.	Thurs.	Details of the loss incident made public in the <i>Advertiser</i> (Adelaide). <sup>34</sup>
17 Sept. 1975		Presumption of Death issued for Carver indicating he was now 'Missing believed dead'. <sup>35</sup>

<sup>30</sup> HQ RAAF Edinburgh, 'Request for information by FLGOFF Herbert's father'.

<sup>31</sup> Jordan, 'Presumption of Death of FLGOFF Michael Herbert'.

<sup>32</sup> HQ 2 Squadron RAAF, 'Details of loss of A84-231 and crew (Herbert and Carver)', as contained in NAA: A703, 660/7/44310 Part 1.

<sup>33</sup> 7 Stores Depot RAAF, 'Notification to Carver's NOK', [immediate message P 23 of 040130Z Nov. 1970 to Department of Air and 2 Squadron RAAF], Toowoomba, Qld, as contained in NAA: A703, 660/7/119223 Part 1.

<sup>34</sup> Anon., 'S.A. Pilot Missing', p. 9.

<sup>35</sup> Jordan, 'Presumption of Death of PLTOFF Robert Carver'.



**GILLESPIE****Table D-6: Casualty Classifications of Gillespie**

DATE TIME	DAY OF THE WEEK	EVENT
17 Apr. 1971 at approx. 1620H (1820 EST)	Sat.	The incident that resulted in the loss of Gillespie occurred.
17 Apr. at 171345Z (172345 EST)	Sat.	HQ AFV sent an Immediate Message advising Gillespie had been killed. Para. 10 of that message stated, 'It is believed the body has been completely cremated but this cannot be confirmed till morning'. <sup>36</sup>
18 Apr. at 171830Z (180430 EST)	Sun.	HQ AFV sent an Immediate Message amending the original notification (sent 4 hours 45 minutes earlier), cancelling para. 10 of the message, because it could not be substantiated at that stage. <sup>37</sup>
19 Apr.	Mon.	Details were made public regarding the loss of Gillespie and CPL Tom Blackhurst. <sup>38</sup> Blackhurst and an American officer, Captain Bernard Albertson also died in the Gillespie loss incident.
10 May		The Officer-in-Charge of CARO issued a Certificate of Death for Gillespie to his widow. <sup>39</sup>

In May 1984, Mr Alfred Rice, a veteran who served with Gillespie claimed somebody recovered Gillespie's body in April 1971—'he saw . . . [Gillespie's] body when it was recovered and returned to base at Nui Dat, the day after the crash. "It was badly charred and unidentifiable as being John, but we were told that is who it was".<sup>40</sup> In responding to queries from the media regarding the allegations by Rice, Army resorted to using McNeill's dubious account of the Gillespie loss incident. 'When advised that someone had now challenged Gillespie's classification, the [Army] spokesman referred

<sup>36</sup> HQ Aust Force Vietnam, 'NOTICAS FATAL: LCPL Gillespie', [immediate message PA 5657 of 171345Z Apr. 1971 to Army Headquarters], Saigon, Vietnam, as contained in NAA: B2458, 3170244.

<sup>37</sup> HQ Aust Force Vietnam, 'NOTICAS FATAL: LCPL Gillespie (Amendment to earlier message)', [immediate message PA 5661 of 171830Z Apr. 1971 to Army HQ], Saigon, Vietnam, as contained in NAA: B2458, 3170244.

<sup>38</sup> B. Healey, '2 Diggers die in 'Copter Crash', *Herald* (Melbourne), 19 Apr. 1971, p. 9.

<sup>39</sup> B. Bradshaw, 'Australian Servicemen Missing in Action in Vietnam', [letter to Director of Operations—Army], 12 July 1984, Canberra, ACT, Department of Defence, as contained in NAA: B2458, 3170244.

<sup>40</sup> Gray, 'Missing' digger died—ex-medic'.

us [the journalist] to an account of the downing of the helicopter in *The Team*, a recently-published book on the activities of the Australian Army Training Team in Vietnam. He [the Army spokesman] said this was generally regarded as an official description of what took place'.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, Army argued Gillespie was 'MIA', not 'KIA', 'because his body was never found in the molten wreck of the helicopter'. The same article goes on to explain an 'Army spokesman said the classification [of MIA] was used only when there was [no] body to show that the person had indeed died. Had a body identified as L-Cpl Gillespie's been found, he would have been officially listed as killed-in-action'.<sup>42</sup> However, the Army has always recorded Gillespie as KIA, never as MIA.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid. As discussed elsewhere, McNeill's account contains a number of errors.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

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