

Veteran recalls shabby treatment

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By KATH GANNAWAY

VIETNAM veterans and their families gathered at Yarra Junction on Sunday to commemorate the 521 Australians who died in the war.

The annual Yarra Valley Vietnam Veterans' Day Combined Service recognises also the 3000 wounded who have in the past, and many who still do live with the fallout of the war and its aftermath.

As guest speaker, Vietnam veteran and RSL Victorian State Branch senior vice-president Robert Webster recalled his experiences, conscripted from a day-to-day civilian life to join his regular army brother on the war front.

In an informative and entertaining recount of his own experiences, he touched on not only the surreal nature of being thrown into a war for those whose numbers came up in the ballot, but also on the throw-away attitude of the defence forces on their return.

Casey MP Tony Smith also spoke, saying a nation would never again treat their servicemen and women in the way the Vietnam returnees were treated.

Local, state and federal government representatives, RSL sub-branches and other affiliated organisations laid wreaths in memory of those who didn't return, and veteran and members of the public placed poppies in remembrance.

The event is an initiative of the Vietnam Veterans Community, Outer Eastern Melbourne Sub-branch of the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia and the RSL sub-branches of Yarra Glen, Healesville, Lilydale, Mount Evelyn, Upper Yarra, and Warburton and the National Serviceman's Association.

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Students from Hoddles Creek Primary School - Keagan, Ben, A Matilda, Charlotte, Maggie and Jc marched. 143172 Picture: GREG CARRICK

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