

Vets vigils draw crowds

RELATIVES AND MATES APPRECIATE OPPORTUNITY TO PAY THEIR RESPECTS

Geordie Cowan

BOB Elworthy could not have been more pleased with how the first state-wide honouring of Vietnam veterans was held on February 21.

Simultaneous gravesite vigils were held at 35 cemeteries across Victoria, including Springvale Botanical Cemetery, where 37 veterans are interred.

The Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia Victorian branch president said he had received a lot of positive feedback.

"I've had next of kin tell me that they have been able to get some closure and understanding, bringing the family together," Mr Elworthy said.

"And the veterans themselves who came to farewell a mate.

"From that point of view, it's been outstanding."

With so many interred at Springvale, Mr Elworthy said there was a "big turn-up" to pay their respects, including hundreds of family members from across the state.

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- BOB ELWORTHY

"The gravesite vigils are an important commemorative event to honour the hardships, difficulties and trauma of the Vietnam War," he said.

"They are also to honour those who fought and lived with determination, resilience, mateship and valour."

To find out more, visit vic.gov.au/victoriaremembers/vietnam

VIETNAM WAR

- Australia's longest military engagement of the 20th century
- Some 60,000 Australians fought in the war, including 10,500 Victorians
- More than 500 soldiers never returned home



Vietnam veterans from C Squadron 1st Armoured Regiment, Rod Burgess and Brian Tateson with bugle player Ian Douglas.

Picture: JASON SAMMON