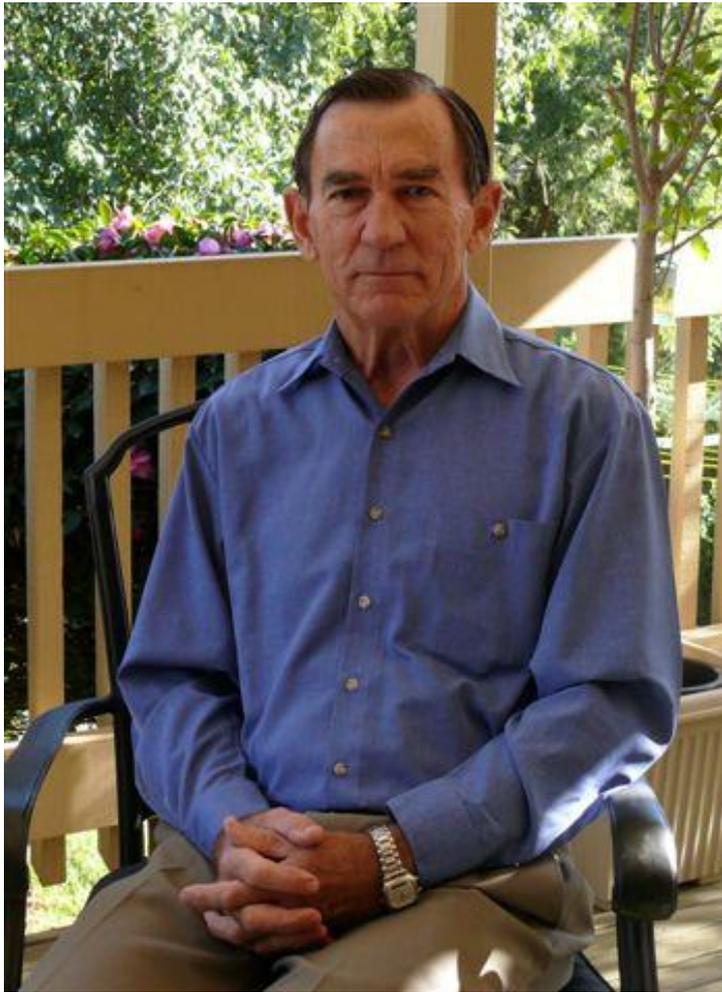


Neil Harvey Weekes AM MC, 21 September 1945 - 6 March 2017



Neil Weekes was never known to walk away from a fight, whether on Vietnam's battlefields or battling bureaucracies over Veteran's benefits. (RAR Website)

'Lead, follow, or get out of the way!' NHW

**Right: Cpl Rod Lynch,
Cpl (Later T/Sgt) Bruno
Flematti,
Cpl (John) Patrick Hansen,
Sgt Chris Webster
2 Lt Neil Weekes.**

(www.1rar.org.au/vietnam-1968-1969/)

**Believed to be 3 Pl, A Coy,
1 RAR staff taken between
29 Apr – 9 August 1968 in
Vietnam.**



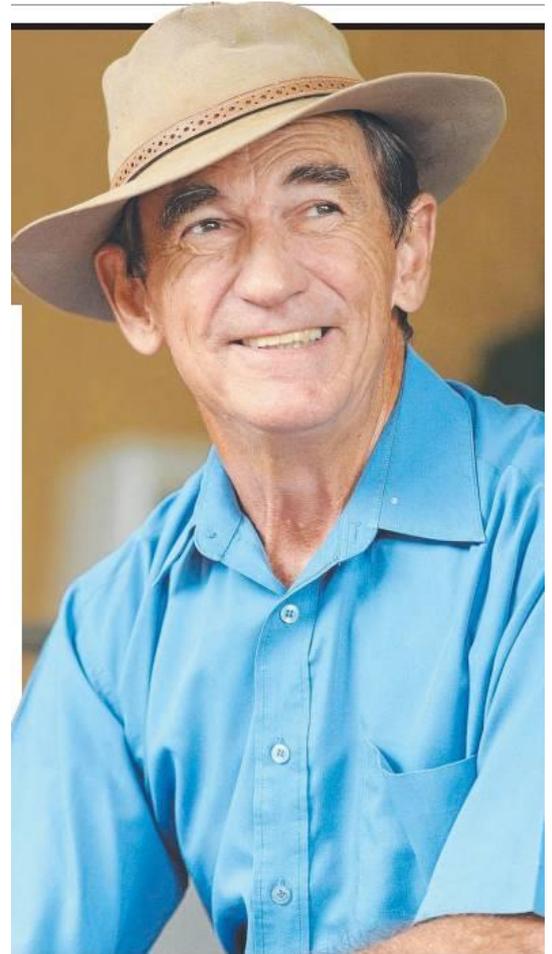
Brigadier Neil Harvey Weekes AM MC

Neil was born at Mackay in Queensland on 21 September 1945 and completed his secondary education at St Brendan's High School, Yeppoon. Before entering NS he was employed as a teacher in the Department of Education, Queensland. On Graduation with Class 1/67 Neil was posted to 1 RAR at Holsworthy. Neil lost his battle with a brain tumour and passed away in palliative care at Wesley Hospital, Brisbane on 6 March 2017. Gary McKay (2/68) was one of the Scheyvillians who attended Neil's funeral and reports:

I attended Neil's funeral as a colleague and a mate having worked closely with him at the RMC-Duntroon and later when Neil commanded Norforce and I was working in the 6th Brigade. It was my honour to also represent the NSW Chapter of the OTU Association at this sad, yet wonderful event.

Neil passed away as a result of a 7-month battle with brain cancer. His funeral was held at the St Michael's Catholic Church in Dorrington, Brisbane, which is not far from the Enoggera Army Base. Neil's funeral was to be a fully blown military funeral accompanied by a Catholic Mass and Communion. In attendance was an Honour Guard who also provided a Catafalque Party inside the church, the Australian Army Band, Brisbane and six Warrant Officer Class 2 Pallbearers from infantry units in Enoggera. Neil's casket was borne to the church on a guncarriage and then carried into the church by the Pallbearers accompanied by a Piper.

The church at Dorrington is quite large and it was packed full. I estimated about 500 people attended the funeral, and it was a true gathering of eagles. The Chief Mourner was Maj Gen Steve Porter AM Commander 2 Division who was a Cadet who Neil taught when he was the Senior Instructor Field Training at RMC. It was a very nice touch.



But the heavies didn't stop there; one of the eulogies was presented by the Governor-General Sir Peter Cosgrove KA, MC who had served with Neil in 1 RAR when he himself

was about to go to South Vietnam. Peter Cosgrove's eulogy was brilliant and summed up the military man, the officer, leader and professional that Neil Weekes was. Neil's motto of 'lead, follow or get out of the way' personified his address. I said hello to Peter Cosgrove prior to

the funeral, and his response to me was, 'a strong showing from the Scheyville guys, Gaz' in acknowledgement of at least 30 Scheyvillians I knew personally who were in attendance.

A second eulogy was given by LTCOL Ted Chitham, MC the President of the RAR Association, who gave a very moving acclamation of Neil's work as an advocate for veterans' rights – a talk that was totally unscripted, from the heart and not without humour. Understandably, there was a very large group of former Army officers in attendance with Maj Gen John Connolly, Maj Gen Mick Keating and Brig Chris Appleton just to name a few. Many of Neil's former soldiers, of all ranks, including men who had come from Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne, Canberra, Darwin, Cairns, Sydney and all places in between, swelled the numbers. Some, like Scheyvillian Dave Mead, had returned to Australia from Thailand. It was tremendous farewell to Neil and a tribute to the sort of man that he was.

May he rest in peace!

Award of the Military Cross to Neil Weekes:

In the Vietnam War, during the night of 12/ 13 May, a North Vietnamese force of approximately battalion strength attacked FSB Coral. Much of the Mortar P1 was overrun along with one gun of 102 Field Battery. Support in the form of helicopter gunships and 'Spooky' air fire support aircraft as well as the integral weapons enabled Coral to remain defended until first light when the enemy broke contact and withdrew. On 16 May 1968 the North Vietnamese began a heavy barrage of rocket-propelled grenades and mortar fire, concentrating on A Company 1 RAR, 1 ATF Headquarters, and the Forward Task Force Maintenance Area. The North Vietnamese launched a battalion-sized attack, which initially fell on A and B Companies. With the artillery and mortars concentrating on close defensive fire tasks, the assault was largely held at the perimeter, although they did succeed in over-running part of 3 Platoon, A Company. Commanded by Lieutenant Neil Weekes, the platoon had been hit heavily by indirect fire during the initial bombardment and had suffered several casualties. Concentrating on the gap created in the Australian perimeter, the North Vietnamese then assaulted with the support of 12.7 mm DShK heavy machine-guns. Ordering his men to fix bayonets, Weekes successfully reorganised the defences and called in close mortar fire to stabilise the position, resulting in heavy casualties among the assaulting force. He was awarded the Military Cross for his leadership in this battle.

1732646, 2Lt Neil Harvey Weekes, 3 Pl. A Coy, 1 RAR (17 March – 10 December 1968), Vietnam, 1962-1975. Military Cross: Commonwealth of Australia Gazette: 6 March 1969, Page 1397, position 8
London Gazette: 28 March 1969, Page 3365, position 7