

VIETNAM VETERANS' DAY
BATTLE OF LONG TAN — FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

525. Mr A. KRSTICEVIC to the Minister for Veterans:

The minister attended a Vietnam War commemorative service this morning at Charles Riley Memorial Reserve in North Beach. Can the minister please remind members of the importance of today's anniversary?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS replied:

I start by acknowledging the year 11 politics and law students from Peter Moyes Anglican Community School in the member for Ocean Reef's electorate. Good afternoon.

Mr Speaker, as you pointed out, today marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan. Earlier today, the North Beach RSL held a very sombre memorial service. I acknowledge the attendance of the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Albany at that service, and of the Premier at another service on Sunday in Kings Park. Since 1987, 18 August has also been designated as Vietnam Veterans Day, so we can commemorate and remember all those Australians who served not just at Long Tan but also during the entire conflict from 1962 to 1973 in all of the services. More than 63 000 Australians fought in Vietnam, of whom 521 paid the ultimate sacrifice; 61 Western Australians lost their lives during that conflict. More than 3 000 were physically wounded, not to mention those who came back with very deep emotional and mental scars that many still suffer from today.

Of course, Long Tan Day and Vietnam Veterans Day are not just about the Battle of Long Tan; it is about all those veterans. In particular, I acknowledge the families of the 61 Western Australians who lost their lives during that conflict. Up on the Vietnam Veterans memorial in Kings Park, permanently etched on the black granite walls, are those 61 names. To honour them, my office this afternoon is publishing on the veterans minister's webpage a short biography of the 61 men who lost their lives during the Vietnam conflict. The very first name in Kings Park by order of seniority of service and rank is Chief Petty Officer Raymond Hunt. He was killed in 1968 on board HMAS *Hobart*. I am fairly familiar with his story, because my father was there when he passed away. He was 27 years old and from Geraldton. The first man to pass away during the Battle of Long Tan was Private Richard Alfred Aldersea, about whom you spoke, Mr Speaker, upon resumption of sitting at two o'clock. The stories of the suffering, the tragedy and the way these 61 great Western Australians lost their lives is worth remembering. I encourage all schoolkids to familiarise themselves with the story and those 61 Western Australians on occasions such as today. As I said, a short biography of the 61 men will be on the veterans minister's website this afternoon.