Australian soldiers fought in scores of fierce actions during the Vietnam War. Few were as intense or dramatic as the action in the Long Tan rubber plantation on 18 August 1966. An isolated infantry company of 108 men, cut off and outnumbered at least ten to one, withstood massed Viet Cong attacks for three hours. They suffered the heaviest Australian casualties in a single enemy engagement in Vietnam, but prevailed against the odds. Their valiant stand became a defining action of the war.

Ashley Ekins will explore unresolved questions about the battle, particularly the strength and dispositions of the enemy forces they encountered, their intentions and plans, and how they viewed the outcome.

Craig Blanch will speak on the history of the Long Tan Cross, from a mere suggestion at a meeting in Townsville in early 1969, through its manufacture and installation, the fraught commemorations and visits to the cross, and its growing relevance to all Vietnam veterans.


Craig Blanch is a curator with Military Heraldry and Technology, and curator of the permanent exhibition of the original Long Tan Cross. Craig’s research has spanned across Australia and New Zealand and has resulted in a comprehensive history of the Cross, with generous assistance from many of the main participants. Craig is also an authority on the Victoria Cross and co-author with Dr Aaron Pegram of the book For Valour: Australians awarded the Victoria Cross, (NewSouth Books forthcoming, November 2018).