

## FOCUS: PHOTOGRAPHY AND WAR 1945-2006

**Alan Cuthbert • Allan Queale • Harold Dunkley • Phillip Hobson • Ian Robertson • Andrew Mattay • Denis Gibbons • John Fairley • Michael Coleridge • Tim Page • David Dare Parker • George Gittoes • Heide Smith • Stephen Dupont • Ben Bohane •**

### An Australian War Memorial Travelling Exhibition

*Focus: Photography and War 1945-2006* is an overview of the historical and aesthetic richness of the Australian War Memorial's extensive collection of photographs through the images and experiences of 15 photographers working in the period 1945 -2006. The exhibition covers a diverse range of images from Hiroshima, Korea, and Vietnam, as well as Australia's role in past and present peacekeeping operations.

It includes the work of official photographers covering conflict for the Australian services or the Australian War Memorial, photojournalists representing the media, and soldiers operating their own cameras in the field. Alan Cuthbert and Walkley Award winning photojournalist David Dare Parker are the Western Australian photographers selected.

### History of Photography and War in Australia

War and photography have a close association in Australian history. Some of Australia's first photographs were taken by military figures, and the country's military culture has been a regular subject of professional and amateur photographs since the mid-nineteenth century. Many of these photographs have become Australian icons and play a vital role in the nation's memory.

The Australian War Memorial's collection of photographs was established during the First World War to honour the men and women who served, especially those who lost their lives. As a comprehensive record taken by official photographers, soldiers and nurses, it was also intended to be of service to those who would, after the event, attempt to piece together its fragments and make sense of the experience and sacrifice of Australians. Similarly, the Second World War was photographed by official photographers and the men and women who served – photographs that subsequently joined those of their predecessors in the Memorial's collection.

After the Second World War the profile of the war photograph waxed and waned according to public interest in the experiences of Australians involved in conflict and the conditions under which photographs were taken. Nevertheless, thousands of photographs recorded the experiences of Australians involved in the postwar occupation of Japan and in conflicts in Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia, and, most prominently, in Vietnam. While competition from television and other visual technologies meant the photograph would never again reach the pervasive level of visibility it had experienced during the First and Second World Wars, it would continue to play a vital role in the way that military activity was documented and presented to the Australian public. For example, in Australia, as elsewhere, photographic images taken during the Vietnam War affected public perceptions of the war and its consequences. What has made the photograph ideal for the historical record has also made it ideal for propaganda purposes, and the photograph can become highly politicised.

In presenting the work of 15 divergent photographers – soldiers, official photographers, photojournalists, artists – *Focus: Photography and War 1945-2006* demonstrates the part played by the photograph in our continuing efforts to record and make sense of the experience of conflict.

Much of this information is an edited version of text written by Shaune Lakin from the book *CONTACT: Photographs from the Australian War Memorial Collection*.

For more information visit <http://blog.awm.gov.au/focus/>

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Mike Coleridge, Vietnam, 1967  
Corporal Graham Pashley seated in a Bell Sioux helicopter after he collapsed from heat exhaustion. AWM COL/67/1107/VN



Ben Bohane, Solomon Islands 2002  
Andrew Te'e, Commander of the Isatabu Freedom Movement (IFM), guarding a checkpoint on the outskirts of Honiara during the June 2000 attempted coup. AWM P04580.033



David Dare Parker, Dili, 2006  
Private Anthony Meixner, provides security for Bombeiros as they attempt to put out a major fire lit by feuding gangs in Calico. AWM P05381.022