

# CHALKIE NEWSLETTER

2/2016

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## **FROM THE EDITORS**

Hello to you all,

This edition of the Chalkie Newsletter comes at a most significant time for the Chalkie Group. Shortly, the West Australian Chalkies will be hosting our National Reunion for 2016. We will be looking at this in more detail later in the Newsletter.

As well, we have the launch of what may well be the definitive account of our part in the history of Papua New Guinea and Australia during the 1960's and 70's, Darryl Dymock's book, *The Chalkies: Educating An Army For Independence.* Our first item in this Newsletter is a review of this book.

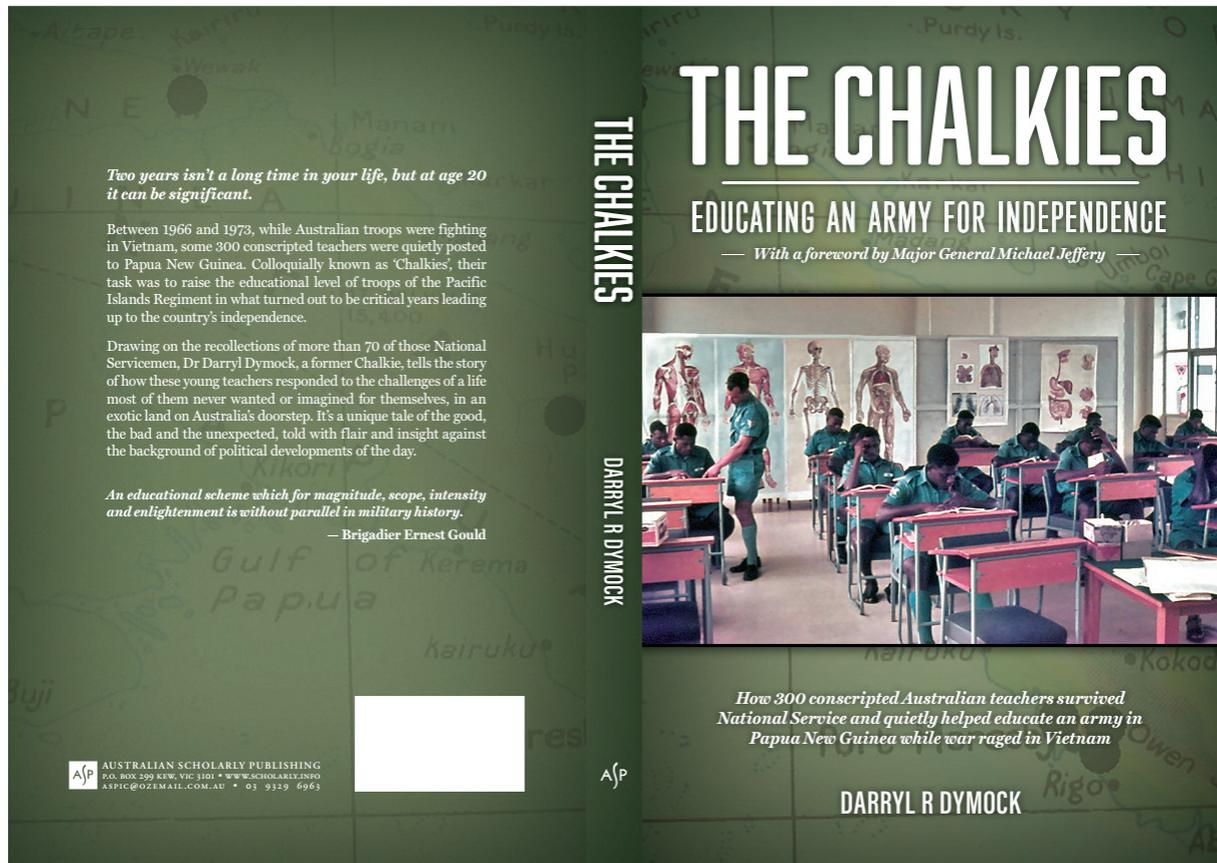
It is appropriate that these two important events are taking place this year as it is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of the first Chalkies in PNG in 1966. It is important also for us to enjoy and celebrate our collective unique experience and also the friendships that were built at that time and in recent years.

We hope you will enjoy this Newsletter.

Ian ([ozoggies2@gmail.com](mailto:ozoggies2@gmail.com)) and Greg (IVEYGJ@GMAIL.COM)

## BOOK REVIEW: (by Ian Ogston)

# THE CHALKIES: EDUCATING AN ARMY FOR INDEPENDENCE



Author and ex-Chalkie, Darryl Dymock, tells the story of the National Servicemen Teachers who served in Papua New Guinea between the years 1966 to 1973. As a former Chalkie myself, I almost felt like I had done my two years National Service again after I had finished reading this book!!! Such was the vividness and richness of the account that it was inevitable that I would feel this way. (However, I could have done without re-living the rather unpleasant recruit training period.)

Yes, this is a great read and an important contribution to the literature and history of the National Service/Vietnam era of Australia and PNG. The sub-title, 'Educating an Army for Independence', is quite a bold central theme to pursue but, to his credit, Dymock makes a strong case for the extraordinary significance of this scheme in preparing the Army for its role in a democratic

nation. He has brought to light newly-uncovered information from archival sources in Canberra and Melbourne on how perceptive the military leadership in Canberra and PNG Command were when it came to readying a nation for independence. It seems they were streets ahead of the almost comatose political leadership of the time.

Perhaps the most outstanding feature of the book has been the use of material collected in a survey of a very good sample of the Chalkie group. The selection of individual accounts of various aspects of the Chalkie scheme gives a richness, authenticity and colour to the story. Balanced against this, I did find that some of the views presented (particularly of Vietnam and conscription) smacked of 40 to 50 years of refinement in the light of history rather than the views of fresh young 20 year-olds in the 1960's.

Impressive also was Dymock's research in which he was able to shine more light onto aspects of the Chalkie scheme that had remained elusive to those of us interested in this story. Particularly relevant here is the author's account of the origin of the scheme. To me this is the clearest statement yet of the genesis of the scheme and gives full credit to the likes of Brigadier Ian Murray Hunter for his role in pressing the scheme into action. Perhaps the most telling quote reported by Dymock in this regard was from Roger Jones who was Assistant Director of Army Education in PNG from 1967 to 1969 who said:

*"I've never really understood how the Australian Army, which we all know can do some incredibly silly things at times, could undertake such a foresighted, nation-building and essentially altruistic task, but I take my hat off to it."*

In all, then, this is a most important book for the 300 plus participants in the scheme and their families. It is perhaps, the definitive account of an amazing and, until recently, unknown chapter in Australian history. Coming at the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of the first Chalkies in PNG, it is a fine celebration of a remarkable time in the lives of the participants.

As Dymock says, there are more than 300 special stories of the Chalkies in PNG. Each one has its deep and memorable place in their lives. This book, however, increases the depth and breadth of each one of these and celebrates in the best possible way the Chalkies' efforts in this developing country to our north.



Author: Dr. Darryl Dymock (Taurama Chalkie 69-70)

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### **BOOK LAUNCH:**

The official launch of *'The Chalkies'* will be held on October 8 (2 pm for 2.30 pm) at the Avid Reader Bookstore in West End, Brisbane. The RAAEC Head of Corps, **Colonel Katrina Schildberger**, will be coming from Sydney to launch the book. All are invited to attend the event but please contact the Bookstore, or their Website, to register for the Launch. Lunch (12.00 o'clock) will precede it at the nearby Coffee Club in Boundary Street. Please contact Terry Edwinsmith ([terryedwinsmith@yahoo.com.au](mailto:terryedwinsmith@yahoo.com.au)) urgently to reserve a place for the Lunch.

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### **NATIONAL REUNION IN PERTH**

The Chalkies National Reunion will be held in Perth this year from Thursday, October 27<sup>th</sup> to Sunday, October 30<sup>th</sup>. The organisers are Graeme Johnson (Moem 69-70), Bob Mason (Moem 66-67) and Greg Leahy (Murray Bks. 69-70).

This is a good time to connect up and celebrate the shared memories of the PNG Chalkie experience. There is a good, strong team of West Australian Chalkies working to make this Reunion something very special. The hospitality of the West is legendary.

(As well as the Reunion activities, this is a good time to spend some time getting to know Perth and the truly fascinating South West of Western Australia.)

A fine program of events has been planned and a summary of these is listed below:

**Thursday 27 October: Meet and greet at the Cottesloe Beach Hotel**

**Friday 28 October: River cruise (10.45am), lunch at Anzac House in the Perth CBD (1.00pm) and Reunion Gathering (6.00pm)**

**Saturday 28 October: The Fremantle experience (11am) and Fremantle end of day meeting (5.00pm)**

**Sunday 29 October: Farewell breakfast 9.00am; Army Museum visit 12 noon.**

(Further details are available from the Chalkie website [www.nashospng.com](http://www.nashospng.com))



WA Reunion committee member, Graeme Johnson