

THIS year will go on record as one of the busiest for 3rd Brigade.

It also marks a turn around in the way we as a Defence Force manage our tempo.

For the first time in many years, all units of the 3rd Brigade are at home.

With the other elements of Army, Air Force and Navy, we will now be much better placed to ensure our foundation warfighting skills are built to a level that will more strongly support the development of skills specifically required for deployment on operations around the world.

Despite these changes, 3rd Brigade has seen the return of four Battle Groups during the last 12 months, two from Timor-Leste and two from the Middle East Area of Operations.

The most recent return was the 3RAR Battle Group, returning to work just a couple of weeks ago.

WE all have a lot to be proud of and deserve a good rest over our traditional return to family period.

Geckos is a runaway success.

It is particularly pleasing to see it is also popular with families that do not even have a loved one deployed.

It has become a popular meeting place for soldiers and their families after work, and a respite location, particularly for young families.

I was amazed to hear one young partner mention that her husband had turned down a posting from Townsville because she discovered there was no family centre similar to

From the Commander's desk

www.armyintownsville.net
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Geckos in the new location. I can assure you Defence is working on it.

ALMOST 25 per cent of our private soldier strength in 3rd Brigade has completed the Junior Leaders Course this year.

At that rate we would have everyone through before their four year initial engagement period was over.

This education is already proving its worth back in the units with NCOs finding the support of another soldier with that qualification very helpful in training and mentoring the remainder of the section.

We owe a lot to Brigade RSM WO1 Barry Vandenhurk for his efforts in this area.

His personal management of the panel via the 3Bde Website and his efforts to produce a junior leader training handbook (also available on the intranet) have been fundamental to this.

This education of our junior leaders is how we will make a good Army into a great one!

OUR Trade Transfer Officer WO1 Ian Kilgour has had a very productive year and produced outstanding results.

We are overworking the Trade Transfer Cell at SCMA due to the number of applications now flowing freely from Townsville (and

also from 3RAR and A Battery in Sydney).

We have reduced the waiting time for applications to pass up through the chain of command to SCMA from more than two months to little more than two weeks.

It is now much easier for soldiers to apply to do something different but remain in Army.

WO1 Kilgour starts the process off and tracks it through the chain of command all the way to SCMA and back to the unit and the soldier.

This is a great success and a significant improvement to our retention rates.

IN the three months since I all of 3Bde in Townsville has been home, more soldiers are recognising the changes that have improved the professional military lifestyle of soldiers.

More and more soldiers are discovering the benefits of their own club.

'Bloody Georges' is getting stronger by the week and making far too much money ... I blame the Bde RSM for this!

His stewardship of the Bloody Georges Committee has been instrumental in their success.

They have bar prices lower than the officers' and SGTs' messes at a bar run by the same contract that runs the other two messes.

Bloody Georges has been sponsoring soldiers in

sporting competitions, not to mention getting their 'brand' established.

I've seen the logo on some very much needed shade shelters for sport on the Bob Brown Fields.

In addition, the sport that was recommenced in part last year was even bigger this year.

There is still some way to go however, to get to the point where every soldier who wants to play sport gets the chance.

That's the challenge for the leaders of all units - to get organised and give us all the opportunity to play sport every week.

BUT without doubt the most important achievement this year has been the sterling efforts of everybody to assist in the preparation of forces for deployment on operations.

In all cases this training, exercising and testing takes the effort of the entire Brigade and many other units including RAAF.

We need enemy players, observers, trainers, role players and examiners, not to mention the routine need for the logistics and communications that goes with the effort.

All of our Battle Groups performed outstandingly well on operations overseas and that must be the best form of validation that our preparations are spot on.

I congratulate and thank everybody involved in that effort, no matter how small you think your involvement was - it is a serious team effort.

THIS is the last edition of the *Northern Services Courier* for this year and the last to which I will con-

tribute as Commander 3rd Brigade.

It is a heartbreaking time for me and my family.

We have loved being back in Townsville for the past two years.

One third of my career in the Army has been spent in 3rd Brigade and Townsville, and sadly, it will be the last time I am posted here.

I am particularly grateful to the families and Townsvilleans who have contributed so strongly to the success of my Brigade, but also more widely to support the ADF in Townsville.

We have a community wrapped around us that supports us to such an extent that only those who have had the benefits of it realise how strong it is.

If you have never been posted to Townsville, you have no idea!

I would like to make specific mention of the Townsville City Council and the Townsville RSL.

Every soldier has been touched by the strong support of these two organisations.

MY RSM and his family and my family and I wish every reader of the *Northern Services Courier* a very happy and safe festive season and all the very best for the future, whatever endeavour you may undertake.

I look forward to watching the exploits of the Brigade with pride in the years ahead.

Be Ready.

- BRIG John Caligari
DSC, AM



Army apprentices mark 60 years

ARMY apprentices ... A quick march! And they did, with a spring in their collective step, to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Australian Army Apprentices School at Bandiana, Victoria.

Townsville is home to many Army apprentices ... not ex-Army apprentice, mind you, because the term is ageless.

Two locals who attended, Bruno Kwasi and Jim Jones, both had a great time and were enthusiastic in their praise for the reunion, held from October 24-26.

The Patron is Chief of Army LTGEN Ken Gillespie, a 23rd intake apprentice brickie.

LTGEN Gillespie took the salute at the march past at the Albury Convention Centre on the Saturday morning and addressed the formal reunion dinner at night.

Apprentices are proud of their intakes, and all were represented, including the first intake, all of whom are now well into their 80s.

Keith "KT" Thomas, who with others graduated from the first intake at Balcombe, Victoria, in 1948, proposed the toast to the apprentices at the dinner.

The final intake members are now in their early 30s, the latter numbers graduating from Albury's Latch-

ford Barracks which were opened for inspection on the Saturday afternoon.

A memorial is being developed in the grounds of the Australian Army Apprentice Memorial Park, Gaza Ridge Barracks at Bandiana.

The Sunday dedication was a special moment that will not be forgotten. The memorial will be a lasting tribute to apprentices who gave their lives on active duty.

Later an historic flag appeared; it was the earliest known Apprentices School flag and was presented to the Army Museum's MAJ G Docksey by organising committee chairman Frank Maloney.

The flag itself was provided by an elderly sapper who wishes to remain anonymous for fear of being confined to barracks for having given himself permission to look after the flag for apprentice reunions of the future.

All present agreed that the sapper had shown foresight and initiative, typical of an Army apprentice.

Will there ever be another mass reunion?

There are no plans at this stage, but the 13th intake could assemble on the Gold Coast in 2010.

- KEVIN FLEMING
(Army apprentice
12/13 - carpenter)



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