

VALE – COLONEL RICHARD (DICK) HOWELL

Dear Fellow Gunners

By now you will no doubt have received the sad news of Dick Howell's sudden and untimely passing on 26 September.

Richard William Howell was born on 29 March 1947. He graduated from the Officer Cadet School, Portsea in December 1969 and was appointed to the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery. His senior classmate, Major (Retd) Hugh Polson comments 'Richard completed a full range of corps and non corps, regimental, operational and staff postings both in Australia and overseas'. A review of the printout of Dick's postings to air defence, field, Regular, Army Reserve, District Headquarters, Central Army Records Office (CARO), Defence Headquarters and Papua New Guinea strongly support this statement. He was well prepared for these postings by education at Staff College Camberley UK and the Australian Joint Services Staff College as well as a member of the directing staff at the Army's Command and Staff College at Queenscliff.

Dick was in 105th Field Battery waiting to go to Vietnam with 1st Field Regiment when Australia's commitment to that war ended in December 1972. However, his subsequent overseas service with the United Nations as an observer in Damascus and Cairo in 1980-81 together with Camberley in the UK, and as the Head Australian Defence Staff (HADS) in Papua New Guinea broadened his experience in compensation. His long time mate from 1972, Lieutenant Colonel (Retd) Jim Jauncey recalls vividly how thoroughly Richard briefed him on life with the UN in the Middle East 'far better and of much more use than those received from Defence'.

It was acknowledged that Dick had a very charismatic way with words and people. His selection for Training Officer with the Army Reserve in Perth, handling NCO postings at CARO, command of 102nd Field Battery, Staff College in England, Staff College directing staff in Australia, Director International Policy in Canberra and as HADS PNG illustrate the recognition, confidence and high regard the Regiment, Army and Defence had for these attributes. 'He was a great people person,' - a most apt summation by Jim Jauncey.

Hugh Polson observes that 'Richard had extensive experience in leading and directing teams in high level international environments and meetings to help develop and implement international Defence policy. His experience in negotiations with senior international officials focusing on the South West Pacific and South East Asia regions as well as his practical experience as a military commander and diplomat in PNG, defence, intelligence and security, gave him a unique place among his peers.' This was strongly supported by Lieutenant Colonel John Duff, Director Joint & Combined Training Capability with whom Dick had been working as a Defence contractor for PSMC in Canberra. 'I had only known Richard personally since Feb last year, but in that very short time we established a terrific bond of mutual respect and trust. He was above all a devoted family man; a gentleman, considerate, compassionate, and a professional with a strength of character in every form,' he wrote.

On a lighter note, 'Dick never laughed - he chuckled,' said Jim Jauncey describing how Richard could find the humorous side of almost any situation and emphasise his remarks with his characteristic chuckle. It is also said that natural disaster was a close companion of Dick's. He was at Wacol during the big Brisbane floods of 1972, Darwin during Cyclone Tracey in 1974 and adjutant of 4th Field Regiment in Townsville when another cyclone hit that city. Jim describe this as 'character building' for Dick.

After 34 years' service, Richard joined the Defence consultant PSMC in Canberra which specialised in Defence training area design and environment management. He was the Support Manager and principal coordinator and the Australian Management Working Group representative in a Combined Management Organisation most recently at Headquarters Joint Operations Command of HQ US Pacific Command. He had just returned from a World Joint Training Scheduling Conference in Colorado (US) and was at home when he suddenly developed chest pains and passed away. An autopsy is being held today and funeral details will be published in the *Canberra Times* on Saturday 2 October. His sudden and untimely death comes as a traumatic shock to his loving wife, Mary, three adult children (Allison, Andrew and Mark), their partners (Davin, Rachel and Michelle) and five grandchildren (Madison, Charlotte, Thomas, Grace and Matilda). The Gunner community and his Defence friends offer their condolences and support to Mary at this time of need. Her contact details are:

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Vale Richard William Howell - a charismatic and very professional Gunner officer, broad military strategic planner and a devoted family man. Gone to the Great Gun Park up above all too early at only 63 years young.

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Arthur

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