



Civilian Medical & Surgical Teams

During the Vietnam War, about 240 doctors and 210 nurses worked in Vietnam under contract with the Department of External Affairs as part of Australia's contribution to a South East Asian Treaty Organisation (SEATO) aid program in South Vietnam.

The program aimed to provide medical aid in Vietnamese civilian hospitals and training to local medical staff.

In 1964, the first civilian medical team from the Royal Melbourne Hospital arrived in Long Xuyen. Following this, most major Australian teaching hospitals sent teams to Vietnam with most teams, made up of doctors, radiographers, anaesthetists and nurses.

Civilian Teams did three or four-month tours, but this was later extended to six months for nurses. Some doctors, unable to be away from their practices for extended periods, did shorter tours.

"The doctors and nurses of the civilian surgical and medical teams provided medical aid and support to the Vietnamese people, often in situations of great hazard and personal peril during the Vietnam War.

"They volunteered, in the great Australian tradition, putting their lives and careers on hold to administer aid to civilians during a conflict in which more than 500 Australians lost their lives in combat." Source Dept of Veterans Affairs

