

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Osborne's Vietnamese odyssey to help save lives

CALLUM TWOMEY

Through his work in the furniture industry, Richard Osborne, the former half-forward flanker who played 283 games with Fitzroy, the Sydney Swans, Footscray and Collingwood over 17 years, has visited Vietnam nine times. His 10th trip, however, might be his most memorable.

This weekend, 13 years since he finished his career with the Magpies in 1998, Osborne will be in Saigon to represent the Vietnam Swans in their Anzac friendship match against the Hong Kong Dragons.

About a year ago, Osborne was approached to be a guest of the game and help promote it.



GOOD CAUSE: Richard Osborne is raising funds to help Vietnamese children learn to swim.

As he became more aware of the dual causes behind the match – to honour lost lives and save young ones – Osborne wanted to become more involved.

More than 10,500 Vietnamese children drown each year, and money raised from the friendship match will be used to help teach Vietnamese children how to swim.

"Initially, it was to go over there and help promote the cause, but then when I found out how many children drown,

I thought I had to get more involved," Osborne said.

"It's a wonderful thing they do to help remember the people lost in the war on all sides, and also raising money for the orphanages."

On Saturday morning, players and officials will visit local Vung Tau orphanages with the game played that afternoon. On Sunday, the group will travel on battlefield tours and, on Monday, it will take part in a dawn Anzac service at Long Tan Cross, one of only two memorials to foreign

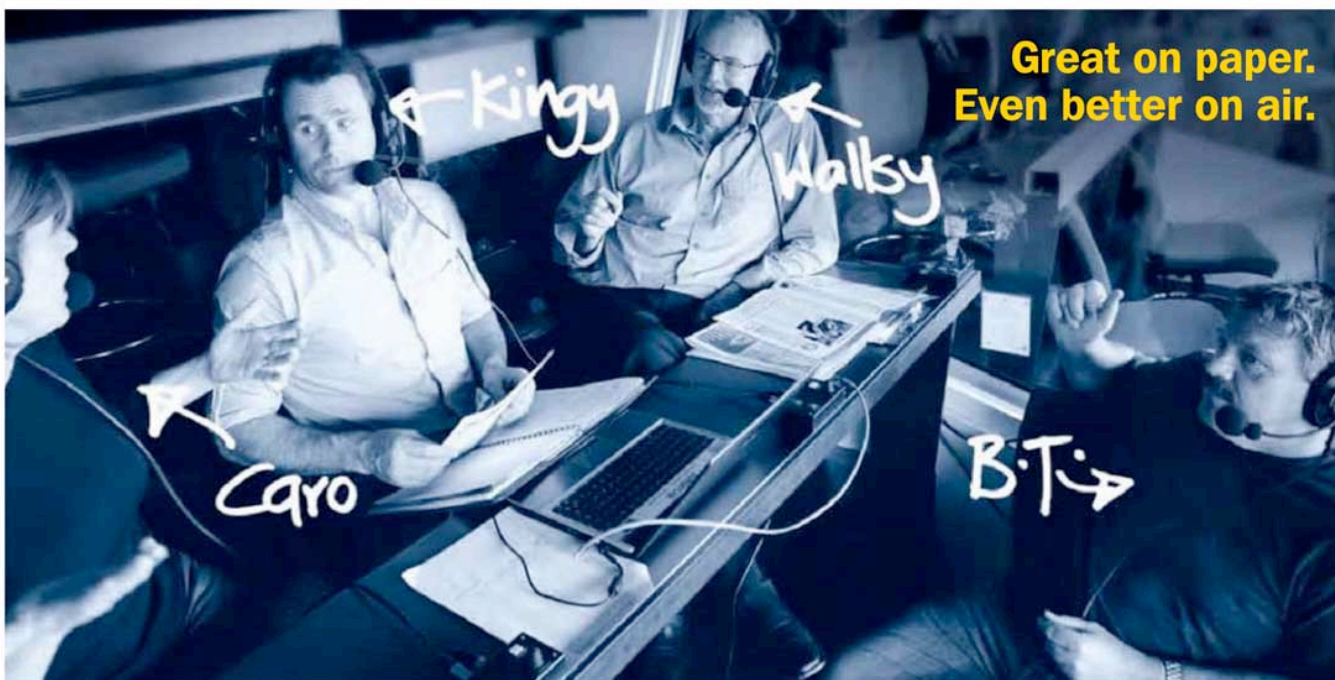
adversaries that have been permitted by the Vietnamese Government. Osborne, 46, expects it to be the pinnacle of the trip.

"The dawn service at the Long Tan Cross is going to be absolutely amazing. That is going to send shivers down my spine," said Osborne, who played in both Anzac Day matches against Essendon in his two-year stint at the Magpies.

Football in the Asian region is strong. This match will be one of three friendship games played over the Anzac weekend, with the Thailand Tigers and Borneo Bears also hosting games. As well as hoping to raise enough money for swimming lessons, plus transport services to help Vietnamese children reach the lessons, Osborne would also like to get a kick.

"I've been playing basketball a couple of nights a week and I've been doing that for 13 years, so that keeps me in a bit of condition but, obviously, a footy oval and a basketball court are two completely different things," he said.

"I might have to bribe the umpire to give me a free kick near goal if I'm struggling."



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