

# GOING OUT WITH A BANG

As the gunners of 7th Field Regiment delivered their last 105mm salvo ahead of major changes, **Sergeant Brian Hartigan** walked the firing line for these words and photos.

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Left: Members of the 7th Field Regiment Association say farewell to the guns.  
Right: A forward observer watches for fall of shot.



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ostalgia, sadness, pride and a little disappointment swept over the gunners of 7th Field Regiment on June 17 when they fired the last rounds from their 105mm Hamel guns – and prepared to hand back their Colours.

On the sunny Sunday afternoon at Singleton Range, the guns of the proud Australian artillery regiment that was first raised in 1916 fell silent for the last time as both the guns and the regiment prepare to give way to progress.

Under Plan Beersheba, 7th Field Regiment will shortly hand back its guns and cease to exist as its soldiers are re-rolled as a light artillery battery equipped with mortars under command of 2nd/17th Royal New South Wales Regiment (2/17RNSWR).

While the gunners will continue to wear the hat badge and lanyard of their corps, many saw it as the beginning of the end for artillery in the Army Reserve.

Charged with managing the transition and keeping his men focused and motivated in the face of major change, commanding

officer 7th Field Regiment Lieutenant Colonel Grant Palmer said there was a good plan in place – subject to final endorsement of the details – that would see the regiment deliver what had been asked of it.

“Within 12 months, we should be able to produce the new structure that’s been generally agreed to. That is, a battery of light artillery, which is joint-fires capable, based on mortars,” Lieutenant Colonel Palmer said.

“In the mean time, the secret to managing the change is to be open and transparent, keeping the soldiers informed as to what’s going on, letting them know what you can and telling them what you don’t know too so that the rumours can’t spread.

“It’s also important to make sure they can see that how the training they are conducting in the interim relates to where we are going.”

Lieutenant Colonel Palmer said the last firing of the guns was certainly an emotional day for the men of his unit.

“Having guns in the regiment is what gunners are all about,” he said.

“However, looking forward, the positive aspect of the transition to Plan Beersheba and the mortar battery is that it produces a better capability for the wider Army than we can currently achieve and the technical standards we can bring to the application of mortars will be significant.

“So, while it is emotional, it’s actually a way of moving into the future with a better capability.”

The men on number four gun for the last shoot were candid in a group discussion about their feelings towards the change, but resolute in their determination to soldier on.

“None of us joined artillery by accident. We’re a weird bunch that way,” they said.

“The new weapon system will be something new for the boys to learn, training liability will be a lot lighter, we can run a lot more courses in-house and we’ll be a lot cheaper to run and to use.

“So, there’s a lot more soldiering left in us yet.”

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