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# **QHTA Webinar**

**The Great Man versus Social Forces: Why did Australia enter and exit the Vietnam War?**

Dr Benjamin Jones – 25th August 2021, 4pm

**Who:** Teachers and theirYear 12 Students

**How:** online registration (FREE)

**Registration here**: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\_jL7lPwj8TMuuaQTyURKsRQ

**About this webinar:**

A long standing question in history is the impact of the prominent actors on the world stage as opposed to great social forces. Does the hero in history really alter the course of world events or do the shifting tectonic plates of society make change inevitable? Applied to the Vietnam War, historians are left to ponder: was Australia’s military entry and exit from Vietnam an inevitable result of the larger geo-political and social forces or did human agency play a decisive role? Many historians have leaned to the former explanation and highlighted the role of the US Alliance and the Cold War context. Nevertheless, new scholarship has suggested that the change in Foreign Minister from Garfield Barwick and Paul Hasluck had a profound impact on Australian involvement. Similarly, Australia’s exit from Vietnam is often seen as one of Prime Minister Gough Whitlam’s significant achievements. Again, however, the impact of social forces such as the media and the increasingly mainstream anti-war movement arguably made the withdrawal a certainty no matter who was in power. This talk will invite students to consider the intersection of the individual and the crowd in shaping history.

A person with a beard

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*Dr Benjamin T. Jones is a Senior Lecturer in History at Central Queensland University. He is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and a Foundation Fellow of the Australia Studies Institute. He has written or edited six books, mainly about Australian history and politics. His most recent book is History in a Post-Truth World (Routledge, 2020).*