



★ FOUR young soldiers who were discharged this week after being found guilty of assault claim they were tortured in their early months of training. From left: Rex Little, 17; Chris Fowler, 18; Geoff Smith, 17; Dermot Holden, 17.

# SACKED SOLDIERS: WE

## WERE TORTURED

By JACK AYLING  
FOUR young soldiers who have been kicked out of the army after being convicted of assault at Balcombe camp say they were victims of brutalisation in their first months of service.

The soldiers were discharged in a bush-bush move this week. They were told they were unsuitable for further training. The soldiers told Truth exclusively that although brutalisation and initiation are forbidden at Balcombe they were jumped on, kicked and pushed and sent on fruitless errands in their first six months at the camp.

### NIGHT OF VIOLENCE AT CAMP

#### SIGNED

They described this as physical and mental torture. The youths who got their marching orders while being held in detention at military police headquarters, 51 Kilda Road, Melbourne, are:  
① **REDACTED**, 17, apprentice radio mechanic, of Coleraine, Victoria.  
② **REDACTED**, 17, apprentice radio mechanic, of Angaston, South Australia.  
③ **REDACTED**, 17, apprentice electrician, of Murwillumbah, northern NSW.  
④ **REDACTED**, 18, apprentice radio mechanic, of Batemans Bay, NSW.  
They had signed up in the army for nine years. They had been at the army apprentice school, Balcombe, for 15 months. Balcombe, 35 miles from Melbourne on the Mornington Peninsula, has about 530

youths training for assorted trades. The four youths who have been summarily discharged told Truth exclusively they thought they had been given a rough deal. They said they were brutalised for about six months.

All four were convicted of having assaulted other trainees at the camp on Monday night, March 12. They were each sentenced to 150 hours (seven days) detention, each fined \$40, plus the loss of one week's pay (about \$16).

After the bakings, trainee **REDACTED**, 18, of Western Australia, was taken in Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital with a broken nose and facial injuries. **REDACTED** said that on Labor Day night (March 12) they went down to the camp senior apprentices' club to

(farewell) a mate who was being discharged the next day. **REDACTED** said "We had a fair few drinks — it is a wet canteen. "I went back to my room in one of the huts. I was feeling pretty upset and frustrated about this bloke being kicked out. "One of the young blokes at my hut — there were about 17 of us altogether — had jacked up on me at lunch time.

#### HIT HIM

"So I thought '..... you' and I went into his room and flew at him. "I told him off first and then I hit him on the right side of the jaw with my closed fist. "I later went back and apologised because I knew I had done the wrong thing." **REDACTED** said he went into the room of another trainee whom he believed "had doxed another bloke in". **REDACTED** told Truth "I told this bloke what I thought of him. I lost my temper and hit him on the ribs twice."

**REDACTED** continued: "..... and I decided to go and get another bloke." **REDACTED** took up the story. "He was in bed and I woke him up. I could see him although I did not switch the light on. "He sat up in bed and I told him what I thought of him and I hit him on the side of the face with my closed fist."

#### DECIDED

**REDACTED** and **REDACTED** they then went into about five other rooms. "We hit about nine of them. We woke them all up." **REDACTED** said he then went to bed but **REDACTED** told Truth he confessed to a sergeant that he had been giving a few of the boys a hard time. **REDACTED** was in the sergeant's room. "The sergeant said: 'I wish you'd give a couple of my boys a hard time.'" **REDACTED** went on. "He mentioned a bloke's name, **REDACTED** and I decided to have a talk to him. "We went down and woke him up. "We both hit him a couple of times, but I don't know where. It was in the darkness." The four youths said that next day the company com-

## YOU'RE OUT! ARMY AXES 4 SOLDIERS

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mander called 120 trainees from C company to the lecture room. **REDACTED** said: "The OC told us that **REDACTED** had a broken nose and had nearly drowned in his own blood. "I thought I would be charged with manslaughter if **REDACTED** died and I was so upset I went to the platoon commander and doxed myself in.

"He took me to school headquarters. I made a statement, signed it and was put in a cell in protective custody."

Later all four were taken before a high-ranking officer. **REDACTED** went on: "I was on nine charges of striking, **REDACTED** was on six, **REDACTED** on one and **REDACTED** on one.

#### ALL OUT

"Two days later, we appeared before the commanding officer.

"Six charges were dropped against me and the others were all on one charge.

"The CO said we could have a court martial or take his sentence. "We took his sentence."

Later they were taken to the military police headquarters in St. Kilda Road, where they were held for several days.

Then last Thursday, March 22, a Balcombe officer told them they had been discharged.