



VIETNAM VETERANS PEACEKEEPERS & PEACEMAKERS

OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE VIETNAM VETERANS FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIA INC

JUNE / JULY 2015

NOTICE BOARD

**Misleading official
pronouncements
about the rates of
suicide and Post
Traumatic Stress in
the Australian
Defence Force.**

**SHOOEY'S
GREAT
NEW SONG!**

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**The Problems Have Easy Remedies
but
The Government Won't Fix Them
1, 2 and 3**

**Plus Much
More Inside...**

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Acting National President's Reflection

Before the election it was all smiles and gratitude; after, it was cut, cut, cut

Since being elected, the government has cut, cut, cut.

- The government intends to reduce the pensions of more than 10,000 Part Service Pensioners and completely cut out the Service Pensions of some 2,800 others.
- The government has withdrawn its \$223million share of an agreement with the States to fund Service pensioners' concessions for travel, electricity, phone and council rates.
- The government intends to axe the three month backdating of Veterans Disability Pension claims; a very long standing concession giving some flexibility for delays in obtaining medical evidence and a recognition of the special nature of military service.
- It intends to axe the Seniors Supplement (\$876.20 a year) for Gold Card holders not receiving income support.
- It has cancelled the indexation of the Clean Energy Supplement added to Veterans Affairs pensions and payments, causing it to quickly lose real value.
- Military Superannuation not previously counted, now to be counted as income when applying for a Commonwealth Seniors Health Card.
- Some regional DVA offices are closing with clients sent to Centrelink.
- Some regional dedicated VVCS offices will close and staff at others reduced.
- The government tried (unsuccessfully thanks to an unimpressed Senate) to downgrade the indexation of the TPI, General Rate Pensions, Invalidity Service Pension, Age Service Pension, War Widows Pension, Income Support Supplement, wholly dependent partner payment. Whilst the Senate thwarted its attempt this time, will it be able to thwart it next time?
- The government has downgraded the quality of hearing aids available under SRCA.
- What's next? ■



Stop Press

Next of kin offered repatriation of Vietnam War dead from Terendak Garrison Cemetery. Page 39

Page 7 Is it ‘Spin’ or What?

Does fighting a war increase the risk of suicide and PTSD. Official pronouncements suggest no additional risk. This is nonsense. Why are these erroneous pronouncements being made. Is it Spin or What? One thing is certain. Such wrong statements are dangerous because they may lead to political complacency.



Page 13 Government continuing to attack veterans’ benefits. Haven’t veterans sacrificed enough?

More than 10,000 Part Service Pensioners payments will be reduced and some 2,800 will lose their pensions altogether, if this government’s decision comes into law. And it is an attack that will destroy those veterans’ incentive to save.



Page 16 A mean act

Under the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act (SRCA), the best hearing aids were available to those with Service caused hearing loss. The government has decided such service men and women unworthy of the best and have condemned them to much lower quality aids.



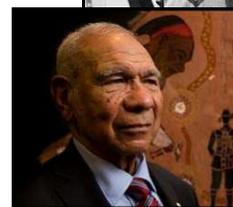
Page 18 Shooney’s great new song

John Schumann did Vietnam veterans a wonderful service in writing *I Was Only 19*. It told Australia our story and made a vast difference to public perceptions. Now he has done the same for aboriginal war veterans. And he and the *Vagabond Crew* are sounding better than ever.



Page 21 Roy Mundine’s new honour

Distinguished soldier Roy ‘Zeke’ Mundine (MID) OAM has been appointed the first *Indigenous Elder* of the Australian Army. We congratulate him.



Page 23 NT Aboriginal kids 130km horse ride tribute to Indigenous WWI soldiers



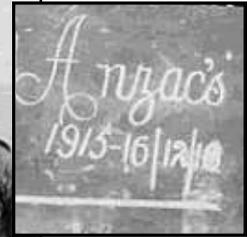
Page 24 John Schumann is donating the artists’ royalties from *On Every Anzac Day* to an organisation helping troubled war veterans

He once did the same for Vietnam veterans.’ Agent Orange Royal Commission fund.

Page 26 The Veterans’ Children’s Education Scheme (VCES) shemozzle

It is a scheme to help the children of our most war effected service men and woman. It is not welfare, it is compensation. And it has been allowed to languish in disrepair. And the Repatriation refused to even discuss it.





Page 28 Refusal to guarantee child care for young mums seeking counselling

It's vital that young mums can access the VVCS when their veteran husbands show signs of war caused trauma. But who will look after the 3 and 5 years old? The Repatriation Commission refuses to guarantee child care, a refusal that could result in tragedy.



Page 34 Dysfunctional appeals system

The Repatriation Medical Authority is at the heart of the Repatriation compensation system. Its decisions determine what disabilities can be claimed as war and service caused. But the appeals system is dysfunctional; stuck in a quagmire of senseless rules and red tape.



Page 37 Help military families research

AFOM is a wonderful organisation. It has a well developed web-site but need a volunteer web-site manager. Can you help?



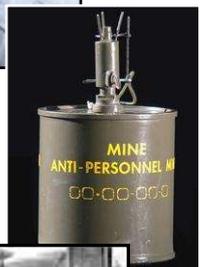
Page 38 **The Afghanistan veterans' story in song**

Singer/song writer/diplomat Fred Smith tells the story of the war in Afghanistan in his iconic song *The Dust of Uruzgan*.



Page 40 New research paints a sad picture of 'suicidality' for Vietnam veterans and their families.

Is the government and the Repatriation system up to the task of preventing a repeat?



Page 41 The Minefield tragedy — **Why?"**

Many Australian and Allied troops were killed and wounded on mines we laid in a minefield that stretched from the Horseshoe to the sea. Why was it laid. Why was it such a disaster? Did we really know what we were doing?

Page 47 What is the buzz?

What's the buzz. What are we hearing from our members and the veteran community in general? There is some criticism of the very large number of millions of dollars being spent on ANZAC Centenary commemorations while veterans benefits are being slashed and burned.



Page 48 Is the Vietnam Veterans Families Study a flop?

The Vietnam Veterans Family Study into families' health has reported. But the results are disappointing to say the least.



Page 48 Saved by the Senate ■



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Incorporating

Vietnam Veterans Peacekeepers and Peacemakers

Association of Australia (NSW Branch) Inc.

Vietnam Veterans Federation Queensland Branch Inc.

Vietnam Veterans & Veterans Federation ACT Inc.

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Cover designed by
our editor Bob Freshfield

FREE PENSIONS & ADVOCACY SERVICE

- We represent former as well as current members of the defence force.
- We represent veterans of all conflicts from World War II to Afghanistan.
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- Should an appeal to the Veterans Review Board be unsuccessful we can, for entitled veterans, arrange legal representation and legal aid for Administrative Appeals Tribunal hearings.
- These services are free.
- Neither is there any obligation to join our Federation although you would be welcome to do so.

Contact any of our Branches or Sub-Bran­ches from the lists elsewhere in this Journal. Alternatively, visit our website, www.vvfganville.org, and email from the lists included.

Tasmanians wishing assistance are asked to call Dennis Hanmer OAM from our Outreach Program at our Sydney Head Office on 02 9682 1788.

What's inside & Regular features

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NSW AGM, Election Results

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 VICE PRES : (X 2) John Rogers
 Sheldon Maher OAM
 SECRETARY: **Ron O'Connor**
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 COMMITTEE: (X10)
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 S Emerson, R Gagan, D Hanmer OAM,
 T Jenkins, I Morrison, Ken Thistlethwaite,
 J Wrigley.
 LIFE MEMBERSHIP CONFURED UPON
 Frank Cole, Bob Gagan, Ken Miller,
 Ted Tokarczyk, and Jim Wrigley.

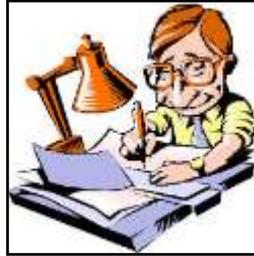
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2nd Prize	P Creeden	Ticket No 7215
3rd Prize	L Donald	Ticket No 1409
4th Prize	B Thurston	Ticket no 7802

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Special announcement from the Editor's Desk

The VVFA National Officer communicates directly with members by posting this magazine through the ordinary mail.

We're going to add another way.

From the end of this year, that direct communication from the National Office to members will also be by e-mail.

To that end, the National Office is gathering a data-base of members' e-mail addresses.

So if you get a request to include your email address in your membership renewal, you'll know the reason why.

There's still a buzz around with many veterans unhappy about \$400 million being spent on ANZAC Centenary commemorations while the government takes the meat cleaver to veterans' benefits and refuses child care for young mums at Counselling.

The Buzz column (Page 45) reports what we're hearing round the traps.

For new material and compliments, please Write, phone, or e-mail:

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'The Secretary'.

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Spin Or What?

Misleading Statements about the Incidence of Veteran Suicide and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

(Submission to the Senate Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade References Committee Inquiry into the mental health of Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel who have returned from combat, peacekeeping or other deployment.)

Suicide

Statements have been made by spokespeople for the Department of Defence that, tragic as veterans' suicides are, their rate is no more than their peers in the general population.

The implication seems to be that, whatever is happening to troops in their military service including fighting the war in Afghanistan, it is not producing a higher rate of suicide than in those not experiencing military service.

Such statements are misleading.

Comparing military personnel with their peers in the general population is statistically unsound. The comparison groups are too dissimilar.

The recruiting process for the military filters out those with even a hint of physical or psychological problems. Then in recruit and further training, the filtering continues.

(If focusing on veterans of the war in

Afghanistan, it should be remembered that Australia's war was fought to a large extent by Commando and SAS units. They recruited mainly from the already filtered infantry battalions then imposed yet more demanding tests.)

“This answer suggested to the listener that fighting the war in Afghanistan might not have caused any elevation in the suicide rate of those who fought.”

This filtered military group could be expected over time to have lower rates of morbidity and mortality including suicide than their peers in the general community.

This difference is a well-known statistical phenomenon known as the 'healthy worker effect' or 'healthy soldier effect'.

The effect was well demonstrated in the Department of Veterans Affairs sponsored study, *Australian National Service Vietnam Veterans: Mortality and Cancer Incidence 2005* (Australian government, Department of Veterans Affairs, Australian Institute of Health Welfare).¹

Included in the study's objectives were to:

- “compare mortality and cancer incidence among the National Service

On 8 April, for instance, on the 7.30 Report, Assistant Minister for Defence Stuart Robert made a misleading statement in answer to a question by Leigh Sales:

LEIGH SALES: There are nine suicides that we know of involving serving and former personnel of HMAS Stirling over the past four years. Can you confirm any more?

STUART ROBERT: The last 15 years, tragically, we've had 106 members of the ADF suicide. Now that's less than the national average, ...(emphasis added)

The Assistant Minister compared the ADF suicide rate with that of the general population, a comparison that is meaningless and misleading.

cohort with the expected mortality and cancer incidence of the Australian community; and

- “compare mortality and cancer incidence of National Servicemen who went to Vietnam to that of National Servicemen who served only in Australia.”²

On the first of these objectives the report says:

“The study showed that as a group National Servicemen were generally healthier than the same aged Australian male population. Overall mortality was 27% lower than expected, ... For the over 60 specific causes of mortality investigated, no cause of death was significantly more common than expected within the Australian community and many were significantly less common than expected.”³ ...

“Taken together, the results showed that due to the healthy worker effect [healthy soldier effect], National Servicemen as a group had lower mortality and cancer incidence rates than the general population.”⁴

Because of the expected ‘healthy soldier effect’, it was realised any results from comparing the health of National Servicemen with their peers

in the general community would be meaningless. So that the Vietnam study would make sense, the second objective was included. The study compared the group of National Servicemen who fought in Vietnam with those who stayed in Australia. Of this study the report says:

“A great strength of this study is that it controls for the healthy worker or healthy soldier effect. The study compares Mortality and cancer incidence among National Servicemen with and without service in Vietnam. The two populations

appear to have been very similar at the time of recruitment. Hence any differences in their mortality or cancer incidence are likely to be related to whether or not they went to Vietnam. The study approximates a natural experiment with individuals assigned to service in Vietnam essentially at random. Both

groups were composed of equally healthy, fit soldiers who at the time of entry into the study differed essentially only by their Vietnam service.”⁵

So comparing the suicide rates amongst the military with those of their peers in the general population is simply unprofessional and meaningless.

“It suggested to the listener that being in or near combat during the war in Afghanistan did not elevate the rate of PTSD in that group. This was, of course, nonsense.”

And the statement that the rate of veterans' suicide is no greater than that of their peers in the general community is not only unprofessional and meaningless, it is mischievous. It suggests war veterans, despite their combat experience, are at no greater risk of suicide.

This is not true.

And there is well known and compelling evidence.

The above mentioned study, *Australian National Service Vietnam Veterans: Mortality and Cancer Incidence 2005* compared National Servicemen who fought in Vietnam (termed in the study, 'veterans') with those who stayed in Australia (termed in the study, 'non veterans').

Here is what the study reported:

- “National Service veterans experienced a 23% higher overall mortality than non-veterans, ...”
- “Deaths from motor vehicle accidents and suicide were significantly elevated among veterans by 31%and43%, respectively.”⁶ [Motor vehicle accidents are included here because they are often suicide attempts]

What it means is this: as a group, those who fight a war will have a higher suicide rate than a comparable group who do not.

It follows that each individual who experiences the trauma of combat has an elevated risk of suicide.

On 9 March 2015, Defence spokesperson, Commander Joint Health and Surgeon General, Rear Admiral Robyn Walker was interviewed on the TV programme, *Four Corners, Bringing the War*

*Home.*⁷

The moderator Quentin Dempster asked Admiral Walker:

“We've heard reports, ah, of a suicide toll three times that of Australia's combat losses in Afghanistan. Um, do you think those reports are accurate?”



Admiral Walker replied:

Um, w-we've, we've heard those anecdotal reports as well. We haven't been able to confirm that data. Um, but my understanding is, ah, Department of Veterans' Affairs is, um, presently trying to, um, actually get a, um, a- a-evidence for what that might be. So anecdotally, we haven't been able to confirm those figures.

Quentin Dempster then asked:

“But you'd agree that suicides from combat-related PTSD are an extremely serious problem, aren't they?”

Admiral Walker replied:

“Um, what I would say is that there are a myriad of causes of why people take their own lives. And the loss of any life is, ah, is tragic. Um, now, ah, we know that PTSD is associated with other mental health conditions. It's associated with, ah, depression, it's ov- associated with, ah, the abuse of alcohol. And, um, there are times when people with PTSD have, um, taken their own lives. So it is **tragic when anyone does that.**”

This answer suggested to the listener that fighting the war in Afghanistan might not have caused any elevation in the suicide rate of those who fought.

What Admiral Walker should have said was something like this:

“We know having been in combat increases veterans' risk of suicide but we do not yet have an accurate



Jenny Brockie comparing Insight: Shell Shocked on SBS TV

number for Afghanistan veterans. The Department of Veterans Affairs is **investigating.**”

That would have been an accurate, direct answer.

That such accurate and direct statements are not being made by Department of Defence spokespeople is troubling.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Rear Admiral Robyn Walker also appeared on the SBS TV programme *Insight, Shell Shocked* on 23 October 2012⁸. It is a programme with a picked audience who participate.

Admiral Walker was asked a question by the moderator, Jenny Brockie:

“Would you expect it [PTSD] to be higher with troops who see active combat?”

Admiral Walker answered:

“Well, interestingly the data at this point doesn't show that and it shows that our rates of PTSD amongst the people who have deployed and those

who haven't deployed, there is no significant difference.”

Whether or not this statistic was correct, it was certainly misleading. It suggested to the listener that being in or near combat during the war in Afghanistan did not elevate the rate of PTSD in that group. This was, of course, nonsense. PTSD results from the trauma of **suffering a real threat to one's life or the life of a physically close comrade**. Many troops fighting in Afghanistan would have suffered such traumatic situations.

Whatever the rationale of the statistic Admiral Walker quoted, it was not that those fighting wars do not suffer an elevated risk of PTSD.⁹

Jennie Brockie asked Captain Ashley Judd, an infantry platoon commander in Afghanistan who had seen considerable action:

“8 percent, [the reported PTSD rate in the ADF] does that sound about right to you? Ash, what do you think?”

Captain Judd answered:

“I can only speak to the quite narrow sample of the guys I deployed with and my own peers, but wildly higher than that.”

Jenny Brockie then asked:

“How much wildly higher than that?”

Captain Judd answered:

“Oh, you know, looking at, looking at my own platoon of 50 guys I would conservatively say that 20 percent have had serious issues of adjustment coming home.”

The simple truth is that, as Captain Judd described, troops experiencing the trauma of combat suffer elevated rates of PTSD. But Admiral Walker made no attempt to support Captain Judd or other Afghanistan veterans in the audience making a similar point. Instead, she allowed her misleading statistical statement to hang there, casting doubt on the credibility of Captain Judd and the other veterans.

This was inexcusable because there was abundant evidence that involvement in combat causes higher rates of psychological illness.

Take the 1985 estimate of the Royal Commission on the Use and Effects of Chemical Agents on Australian Personnel in Vietnam that:

“There is a Vietnam veterans’ syndrome, broadly corresponding to PTSD. At this time about 25% of Vietnam veterans will have psychological symptoms requiring treatment, and this number may be expected to peak in 1988-89...”¹⁰

In the series of Morbidity of Vietnam Veterans studies, Volume 1: Male Vietnam Veterans Survey and Community Comparison Outcomes (Department of Veteran’s Affairs (DVA) 1998a) indicated higher rates even than those of the general community of depression and PTSD.

And the elevated rates of suicide amongst those who fought in the Vietnam War must



SOTG, After Afghanistan Painting by Ben Quilty
With his kind permission

suggest elevated rates of psychological distress including PTSD.

What Admiral Walker could and should have said was this:

Troops involved in combat will have higher rates of PTSD than troops not

involved in combat or similar traumatic experiences.

She could have added that groups of troops who have been in intense combat can experience very high rates of PTSD.

She could have added that the number suffering PTSD and other psychological distress is likely to climb for years after the fighting has finished because its effects are often delayed.

That she did not make such a statement is disappointing.

Graham Walker
National Research Officer
Vietnam Veterans Federation
For
Bill Roberts OAM
Acting National President
30 March 2015 ■

See also **New alarming study on the 'suicidality' of Vietnam veterans and their wives** on page 40.

References

1 *Australian National Service Vietnam Veterans: Mortality and Cancer Incidence 2005* (Australian government, Department of Veterans Affairs, Australian Institute of Health Welfare). See from page xvii.

Copy at http://www.dva.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/consultation%20and%20grants/healthstudies/mortcanvietvet/national_service_report.pdf

2 *Ibid*, page xvii.

3 *Ibid*, page xx.

4 *Ibid*, page xx.

5 *Ibid*, page xviii.

6 *Ibid*, page xix

7 <http://www.abc.net.au/4corners/stories/2015/03/09/4191681.htm>

8 SBS TV programme *Insight, Shell Shocked* on 23 October 2012

<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/insight/tvepisode/shell-shocked>

9 There are obvious possible reasons for the Admiral's statistic.

- Dilution of the 'deployed' statistic because most 'deployed' ADF members are not involved in or close to combat.

- Increase in the statistic of those not 'deployed' because of dangerous training, training accidents or dangerous/distressing operations in Australia (such as those intercepting or observing asylum

10 Royal Commission on the Use and Effects of Chemical Agents on Australian Personnel in Vietnam, Final Report July 1985, Volume 5: Mental Well-being, page IX-163.

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A prescient Blue Ryan once said:

"It is a sad truth that we must not only fight to fill gaps in support for disabled veterans, we must also be ever ready to defend that which we already have."

Read on...

Government's continuing attack

The Service Pensions of more than 10,000 veterans will be reduced and some 2,800 will be cancelled

How does it all works now?

In deciding how much Service Pension to pay you, DVA tests your financial situation. These are 'means tests', that is, tests of your 'means'.

There is the 'income means test' and the 'assets means test'.

For the 'income means test', DVA looks at your income. DVA does not include the TPI or other veterans disability pensions. It also excluded a small amount known as the 'means test free area' (for a single pensioner an amount of \$160 a fortnight, more for couples). For every dollar of your income over that means test free threshold, DVA deducts 50 cents from the full rate of your Service Pension.

The total is noted.

For the 'assets means test', DVA looks at your financial and other assets. DVA does not include your place of residence. It also excludes a means test free area (for a single pensioner an amount of \$202,000, more for couples). For every thousand dollars of assets over this means test free threshold, DVA deducts \$1.50 from the full rate of your Service Pension.

The total is noted.

You get the lesser of the two totals. (Figures will differ for those on Work Bonus and for non-home owners).

The government's attack

For those veterans whose Part Service Pension is calculated by the 'assets test', the news may be bad.

A change will commence in 2017.

Currently, the Service Pension is reduced by \$1.50 for every \$1,000 worth of assets held above the means-test free threshold. The government intends to double this reduction to \$3 for every extra one thousand dollars of assets. Is this fair?

On 9 May 2006 when reducing the taper rate from

\$3 to \$1.50, the then Treasurer, Hon Peter Costello, said this:

"The current taper rate of \$3 means that a retiree loses more age [Service] pension than they earn on their additional savings if they do not achieve a return [on their assets] of at least 7.8 per cent a year. This is a large **disincentive to save for retirement.**"

The question is this: Are Service Pensioners likely to achieve a return of 7.8% on their savings?

The answer is: "Mostly, they'd have to be dreamin". They'd be lucky to get 4%.

"...taper rate of \$3 means that a retiree loses more age pension than they earn on their additional savings if they do not achieve a return of at least 7.8 per cent a year."
(Treasurer Peter Costello)



So the government's attack is an attack on the incentive to save. Why bother to save when the government will take away from you more than your savings earn?

Indeed, why, some are asking, retain savings above the mean test free threshold if those savings reduce rather than increase your income? Why not, they ask, spend any savings above the means test free threshold on a luxury overseas holiday and come home to a higher income.

Others would rather play it safe and keep their savings even if it means a lesser income because they fear what this government might do next to the Service Pension.

Of course, individual circumstances vary and Part Service Pensioners with this problem should seek professional advice before taking any action.

What are the means test free thresholds?

There is some good news. Currently, up to \$202,000 of assets is means test free for singles. The figure for couples is \$286,500.

In 2017, when the increased taper rate is due to commence, these limits will be increased to \$250,000 for singles and \$375,000 for couples. These increases will benefit some Service Pensioners.

But the overall effect is that many more Part Service Pensioners will be disadvantaged than advantaged.

And here's what the Australian newspaper says

In a front page story in the 21 May edition, Political Correspondent David Crowe reveals that 'A new study shows that the federal government changes—budgeted to save \$2.4 billion—will expand over time to reach far more people than expected.'

Something to look forward to!

It's just one more attack

The story of the government's attack on veterans' benefits does not end there.

Already the government has pushed through Parliament legislation reducing veterans benefits and services.

- The government has newly included military superannuation as income in the assessment for the Commonwealth Seniors Card.

- The government has withdrawn its share of an agreement with the States to fund Service pensioners concessions for travel, electricity, phone and council rates.

- Some (an increasing number) of regional DVA offices are closing, forcing veterans to visit Centrelink. Elsewhere, staff are being shed.

- Some dedicated VVCS offices in regional areas are marked for closure and staff are being shed.

- The government is reducing communication with the veteran community by axing several committees that represented veterans' view to the department and government.

- The government has downgraded the quality of hearing aids available under SRCA.

- The government intends to axe the three month backdating of Veterans Disability Pension claims.

- It intends to axe the Seniors Supplement (\$876.20 a year) for Gold Card holders not receiving income support

- The government has ceased indexation of the Clean Energy Supplement for both Service Pensioners and Veteran Disability Pensioners, quickly reducing its real value.

A matter of trust

The changes already made and those proposed were not announced by the Coalition before the September 2013 Federal Election; they were sprung as nasty surprises after.

Sadly, the Coalition presented itself before the election as specially grateful for the contribution and sacrifice of veterans, then turned on us.

Sacrifice

The government says we must all sacrifice. But haven't war veterans sacrificed enough?

Government slashes SRCA hearing aid benefits



In a shock move, the government has drastically downgraded the quality of hearing aids it provides under the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation ACT (SRCA).

Previously, claimants were entitled to the highest quality hearing aids, but no longer. The entitlement now is for a standard lower grade hearing aid that is, for many, less than satisfactory.

The comment often heard about these lower grade aids is that they are fine in a one to one conversation with no background noise, but in a noisy restraint or in a chattering crowd, they are not much help.

The previously available hearing aids, the higher quality ones, could be programmed for the situation. Change the programme to cut out background noise or the sound of wind on a windy day etc.

So why this downgrading of veterans' benefits?

It fits a recent pattern. Small cuts that might individually slip under the radar, but taken together are a serious attack on veterans' benefits. ■

VietnamVetsNL 2015-02-09T17:22:09+11:00

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Australian Government
Department of Veterans' Affairs

*"And when the show was over and we made it back
to Australia's shores*

*From Pozieres and Herleville Wood, Benghazi and
Fremicourt*

*We drifted back into our lives, and we all tried to
hide the scars*

*Of the tears and fears and terrors that still
tracked us down the years*

*He tried to join the RSL but the bastards
wouldn't let him in*

*They didn't see a soldier, just a first
Australian"*

Read on...

John Schumann's great new song

Listen at:

<https://youtu.be/KE3PiObOxJQ>

Indigenous soldiers who have fought for Australia over 114 years get their service recognised by a new John Schumann song. The Army hopes it will be as big as *I Was Only 19*.

Chief Of Army Lieutenant General David Morrison commissioned John Schumann to compose *On Every Anzac Day* to pay tribute to the indigenous men and women who volunteered to fight for their country — even when they were not recognised as citizens.

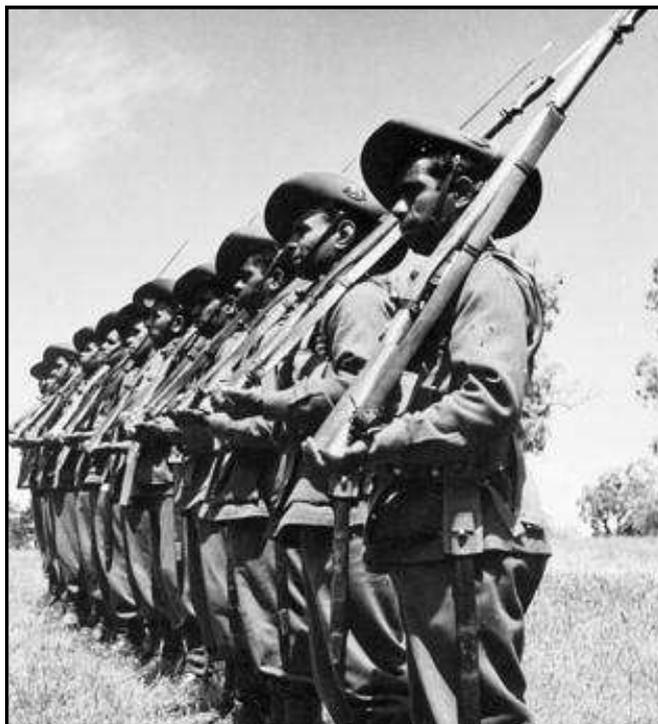
The song not only celebrates the mateship of indigenous and white Australians in the trenches but hits out at the discrimination suffered by Aboriginal soldiers when they returned from war.

Schumann enlisted mates Rob Hirst and Shane Howard to join his Vagabond Crew band for the song which was performed for the first time at the Australian War Memorial not long before ANZAC Day.

It is a great song that tells the story of Indigenous soldiers just as *I Was Only 19* tells the story of Vietnam veterans.

It is certainly a song worthy to stand beside *I Was Only 19*.

To understand the contribution of Indigenous soldiers, you need only listen to the song. ■



Sergeant Reg Saunders.
Picture: Australian War Memorial



Chief of Army, Lieutenant General David Morrison, AO (left), songwriter, John Schumann and Director of the Australian War Memorial, Dr. Brendan Nelson, address the media during the launch of the Army Indigenous Song, *On Every ANZAC Day*, at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.

Songwriter John Schumann and his band perform *On Every ANZAC Day* as part of the tribute to Indigenous soldiers at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra.



John Schumann OAM who wrote *I Was Only 19* and who has now written another masterpiece, *On Every Anzac Day*

WOI Roy 'Zeke' Mundine OAM (retired) further honoured

On Anzac Day 1969, Roy Mundine was on an operation with the 5th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment in Phuoc Tuy Province, Vietnam. While moving forward to clear a bunker system, Roy tripped a mine. 'I was engulfed by a huge explosion', he says, 'then realized my leg was in tatters'. He continued to direct his troops but later lost the leg. Roy was Mentioned in Despatches (MID) for the action..

Roy is a Bundjalung man and was born in Baryulgil in New South Wales. After joining the Army in 1958 he enjoyed a long and distinguished career including active service during the Malayan Emergency and two tours in Vietnam.

He had many postings including as an instructor at RMC, Duntroon.

On 17 April 2015, Roy was appointed the first *Indigenous Elder* of the Australian Army by Chief of Army, Lieutenant General David Morrison AO.

As Army's *Indigenous Elder*, Roy Mundine will represent serving and ex-serving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island personnel, advise Army's senior leadership, and participate in events of Indigenous significance.

We wish Roy all the best in his new well deserved role. ■



Newly appointed Australian Army *Aboriginal Elder*, WOI Roy Mundine OAM (retired), during the launch of the Army Indigenous Song, *On Every ANZAC Day*, at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra on 18 April 2015.



Uncle Roy Mundine, OAM, takes on the role as the inaugural Army *Indigenous Elder* at a ceremony in Canberra on 17 April 2015.

Uncle Roy is a Bundjalung man who served in the Australian Army for 36 years, joining in 1958.

Chief of Army, Lieutenant General David Morrison, AO, appointed Uncle Roy Mundine, OAM, the inaugural Australian Army *Indigenous Elder* at a ceremony in Canberra on 17 April 2015.



Corporal Roy Leonard Mundine (MID).



NT Aboriginal kids 130km horse ride tribute to Indigenous WWI soldiers

Private Harold Cowan, from Grafton NSW. One of many Aborigines who served with the AIF in WWI.

Harold Cowan served with the 6th Light Horse Regiment.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have had a significant but little-known role in our armed forces.

While not given the recognised status enjoyed by all other non-indigenous people in Australia, Aborigines came forward in numbers to join the AIF and fight on the various fronts. One group served with the



Australian Light Horse in WWI.

A group of teenagers from a remote Central Australian community have ridden 130 kilometres into Alice Springs on horseback, to honour Indigenous servicemen who served in the World War I.

The 20 senior-school students, from N'taria, also known as Hermannsburg, west of Alice Springs, spent five days in the open country and Western MacDonnell ranges, riding brumbies very similar to the sturdy Waler horses used by the WWI Light Brigade. ■

Royalties of John Schumann's great new song, *On Every Anzac Day*, go to helping troubled veterans

John Schumann donated the artists' royalties of *I Was Only 19* to the VVAA's Agent Orange Royal Commission fund. It was a most generous act.

Now he's doing it again for the younger diggers. This time he's donating the royalties from *On Every Anzac Day* to Trojan's Trek, a wilderness-based program for veterans suffering from PTSD. (John Schumann is a member of the Board).

The song is featured on the CD album, *Behind the Lines, John Schumann and the Vagabond Crew (expanded edition)*.

You can buy the CD at a music store.

Or you can download the full CD or just the song from iTunes.

Or you can buy the single of the song (CD-EP) for round \$8 plus postage from the music store, Songland Records in Canberra:

songlandrecords@gmail.com

Trojan's Trek is a program which was first run in the North Flinders Ranges of SA in the late 1990s to assist troubled Vietnam veterans return to a normal life.

Participants figuratively undertake a journey, which facilitates new ways of viewing themselves,



their colleagues and partners in a remote location while investigating ways to facilitate change. Some of the past trekkers have denoted this as a 'stocktake of life, feelings and behaviour.'

The program is live-in, is highly individually focused and delivered by staff that have the necessary accreditation.

The show is run by Vietnam veteran Moose Dunlop OAM, an experienced soldier and Vietnam veteran. And his staff are all ex Warriors too who have experienced and overcome the same difficulties as those attending.

Trojan's Trek provides the setting and conditions under which participants can learn to re-enter the community.■

**The problems have easy remedies
but
the government won't fix them 1,2 and 3

(and is the Repatriation Commission*
the major obstacle?)**

Read on...

*The Repatriation Commission comprises the Head of Department, Simon Lewis PSM, Major General Craig Orme, AM CSC (ret'd), Major General Mark Kelly AO DSC (ret'd). It is responsible for granting pensions, allowances and other benefits, providing treatment and other services.

The government won't fix it—1

The Crippling of the Veterans' Children's Education Scheme

It was a DVA debacle (but the Repatriation Commission refused to even discuss it)

The Family Tax Benefit A and B are means-tested Centrelink payments to help families support and keep their children at school.

There are two education schemes specifically to support certain veterans' children through their education. They are the Veterans Children's Education Scheme (VCES) for pre-2004 veterans and the MRCA Education and Training Scheme (MRCAETS) for post-2004 veterans.

In January 2012, the government significantly increased the Centrelink Family Tax Benefit for children 16 to 18 years old studying at high school but failed to increase payments in the equivalent veterans' education schemes.

This was puzzling. The veterans' schemes were set up to compensate the disadvantages suffered by the children of veterans killed or severely incapacitated as a result of service related injury or disease. It could have been expected that these payments would have been first in line to have been raised and perhaps raised more than Centrelink payments. Not to have been raised at all was astonishing.

Those families in the veterans' schemes with children at high school were thrown into confusion. Would they be better off leaving the veterans' schemes and applying to Centrelink?

And the veterans' schemes had additional benefits in the form of remedial tuition, special grants and guidance and counselling. Would these be lost in the transfer? And the veterans' schemes, being compensation rather than welfare, were not means-tested so that not all veterans' scheme recipients would be eligible for the Centrelink payments.



Round this time, enquiries by the Partners of Veterans

Association of Australia Inc and the Vietnam Veterans Federation suggested the Department of Veterans Affairs officers were just as confused as they were. The Department failed even to advise or consult with State Boards responsible for supervising the schemes.

Eventually, but not before the confusion was well established, the Department circulated a letter telling families they had the option of transferring to Centrelink and advised them to test their eligibility on the Centrelink web-site.



Confusion increased when it was discovered the web-site test was faulty and the Department had to advise families to enter false data to get the correct result.

Later, the Department advised that the transferred children could still be supervised by the State Boards and receive remedial tuition. Later still, the Department advised the special grants would also be available.

But in this correspondence, the Department gave no explanation as to why the veterans' schemes payments had not been raised.

We now know this shemozzle should simply not have occurred:

It was not as though the Department was rushed to organise the increase. The announcement that the government would increase Centrelink Family Tax Benefit A and B for eligible 16 to 18 year old high school students was made in August 2010 with the Department officially made aware of it in December 2010, yet the change did not take place till January 2012. There had been over a year to prepare.

So how *did* the shemozzle occur?

Even though the government announced the Family Tax Benefit increases in August 2010 it was not until a year later, August 2011, that the Department made a submission to the Repatriation Commission (the three person body ultimately responsible for Repatriation policy). That submission

informed the Commission of the increase to the Centrelink Family Tax Benefit but recommended that no equivalent increase be made to the Veterans' Schemes.

Yes, that's right, the Department charged with looking after the interests of veterans recommended that the increase to Centrelink Family Tax Benefits *not* be passed on to the equivalent payments under the veterans' schemes; schemes designed to help the children of veterans killed or severely incapacitated as a result of service related injury or disease.

Work that one out!

The Repatriation Commission however, did not accept the submission and ordered another.

In September 2011 a second submission, this time recommending increases equivalent to those of the Centrelink Family Tax Benefit was accepted by the Repatriation Commission.

In November 2011 the submission was circulated to other government agencies for comment.

One government department was quick to point out that the financial impact of Centrelink Family Tax Benefit B had not been taken into account in the submission.

Another submission, remedying the omission was prepared by the Department but failed to be dispatched before the deadline of 29 November 2011.

Efforts to have the submission accepted after the deadline failed.

On 1 January 2012, the Centelink Family Tax Benefit increased by up to \$4,245 per child per year while the veterans' schemes languished unchanged.

The then Coalition Opposition criticized the failure but now, in government, won't fix it.

The Repatriation Commission which was ultimately responsible for the debacle have refused to discuss it. It has thrown up a wall of silence in defence of the Department's incompetence. ■

The source of much of this article is *Audit of the Veterans Children's Education Schemes by the Australian National Audit Office; Performance Audit Report No 29 2012-13.*

<http://www.anao.gov.au/Publications/Audit-Reports/2012-2013/Administration-of-the-Veterans-Children-Education-Schemes>

The government won't fix it — 2

No guarantee of child care at the VVCS for young mums

(The Repatriation Commission promotes 'early intervention' but are they really serious?)

The children of Vietnam veterans have had a 300% higher suicide rate than their equivalents in the general community, a statistic resulting from veterans' families becoming dysfunctional because of veteran fathers' war caused psychological illnesses.

A recent study finds the wives of Vietnam veterans also have a much elevated suicide risk. (see article page 40.)

We don't want those horrendous statistic repeated for the children and partners of our younger comrades in arms.

So it is vital to encourage the partners of younger servicemen/women as well as the servicemen/women themselves to seek help at the Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VVCS) as soon as family dysfunction threatens.

But for mums with young children, finding child care for the period of the counselling may be difficult. Indeed, professional casual child care is almost impossible to find and if found may be prohibitively expensive.

Of course, some young mums may have accommodating neighbours or nearby family who will mind the children. And some Counselling Centres may be able to arrange appointments so there are several young mums who can look after each-others' children.

But failing any of these ad-hoc costless arrangements, the VVCS refuses to provide child

care. It will not, for instance, bring in a casual child minder or nanny.

Even if face to face counselling is considered most clinically appropriate in a particular case, but lack of child care prohibits it, only the inferior option of telephone counselling will be offered.

One excuse given is 'expense'.

This is, to say the least, short sighted.

A few dollars for a casual child minder is of no consequence compared with the cost in suffering and welfare of a dysfunctional family.

As Professor Dunt said: 'There are too many barriers to seeking mental health care...'

Clearly procuring child care is one of them.

We have made approaches a number of times on this vital issue but have been rebuffed each time.

Is the Repatriation Commission really serious with its mantra of 'early intervention'?

Recently they refused to even discuss the matter saying visiting the Counselling Service is no different from visits to the doctor or dentist.

We disagree.

Failing to seek counselling may have vastly more injurious consequences for the family including an increased risk of the suicide of the children and partner.

It's a problem with an easy remedy, but the government won't fix it. ■





VIETNAM VETERANS FEDERATION &
VIETNAM VETERANS, PEACEKEEPERS & PEACEMAKERS
ASSOCIATION of AUSTRALIA (NSW BRANCH) Inc.



in conjunction with

BANKSTOWN DISTRICT SPORTS CLUB

Invite you to attend

VIETNAM VETERANS DAY TUESDAY, 18 AUGUST 2015



This year the VIETNAM VETERANS DAY COMMEMORATIVE SERVICE, organised by the VIETNAM VETERANS FEDERATION and THE VIETNAM VETERANS, PEACEKEEPERS & PEACEMAKERS ASSOCIATION of AUSTRALIA (NSW BRANCH) Inc., will once again be held at the BANKSTOWN DISTRICT SPORTS CLUB, located at 8 Greenfield Parade Bankstown. If arriving by rail use this entry. If arriving by vehicle, free car parking is available via the Mona St., car park entry. There are also bus services from Parramatta, Liverpool and Hurstville. Doors open at 0900hrs. Make your way to the Grand Ballroom entry hall.

TICKETS \$35.00 EACH AND ON SALE FROM RECEIPT OF THIS NOTICE

We would prefer that tickets were sold out prior to the event, and the Committee realises that there may be some who will turn up on the day without prior arrangement. However, be warned, seating is limited, tickets are numbered and issued per table number. If you chose to arrive without pre-ordering a ticket you will have to wait until ticket holders are admitted first, and catering staff alerted to any extra seating arrangements. We hope the majority will avail themselves to one of the options of pre-payment/ordering and make use of the following points:

- Pre-purchase tickets at the Granville office
- Pre-pay via Credit Card by phone or with the form at bottom of next page
- Pre-pay by Cheque or Money Order
- Order your ticket by phone or letter, fax or email, and advise your intent to pay on the day.

Using any and all of these methods will provide accurate numbers for catering purposes, and function logistic controls. If you require a table of 10 for your mates, no problem, but please let us know prior to the day and when ordering your ticket/s. Advise how many will be in your group, and a table will be reserved for you. Remember, we require all reserved tables of groups to be paid by 11 August, and a name for the tickets to be held in, if collecting on the day. If no particular seating is required, simply sit at the table designated on your ticket.

Making use of the TRAVELODGE HOTEL located within the club premises is available at special rates for those attending the function. You can stay the prior evening or following the function on Tuesday. However, we advise to book early.

**YOU MUST MENTION THE VIETNAM VETERANS FUNCTION
TO ACHIEVE THESE RATES**

Room Rates: \$155 per night room only

Breakfast can be arranged at an extra charge.

(Pricing is subject to change and are as quoted at time of going to print, we apologise for any inconvenience).

For bookings call 02 9793 0000 or 1300 886 886.

*Contact the Granville office for further information: Ph 02 9682 1788 Fx 02 9682 6134 or
email to secretay@vfvgranville.org*



VIETNAM VETERANS DAY
TUESDAY, 18 AUGUST 2015



The function will be held in the *Grand Ballroom*.

ITINERY & TICKET ORDER FORM

- 0900hrs Doors open. Meet & Greet at the Grand Ballroom entry hall.
Bar opens 0930hrs to 1030hrs (at the discretion of management and closed for the service.)
- 1100hrs Memorial Service & Guest Speaker
Major General Mark Kelly AO DSC (Rtd)
Repatriation Commissioner in DVA
(Service scheduled for approximately 40 to 45 minutes)
- 1150hrs Entrance to Grand Ballroom & function proper
- 1215hrs Buffet Lunch
- 1300hrs Entertainment provided by Bankstown District Sports Club
Featuring Australia's Ambassador of Rock & Roll, and Rockabilly All-Star.
ROLAND STORM and Band

TICKETS \$35.00 per person
Tickets are to be pre-purchased/ordered, and can be paid by cash in person from the Granville office. Alternatively you may pay by Cheque, Money Order, or Credit Card. (using the cut-out form below). Tickets will be numbered and include your table number. **Don't forget to leave a contact number in all instances.**

TABLES Tables will be set for ten (10), and if you wish to organise a group, let us know when booking and all booked tables are to be paid for by Thursday 13 August for catering purposes.

(REFER TO NOTES ON PREVIOUS PAGE)

ACCOMODATION Special rates have been offered for those wishing to make use of the TRAVELODGE HOTEL located within the club premises, and is available for anyone wishing to stay overnight the evening before and/or following the function. See previous page for Room rates.

RAFFLE Raffle prizes will be on display, and tickets will be sold throughout the day, with the draw to take place immediately following the entertainment. Please find a seller and make your purchases frequently.



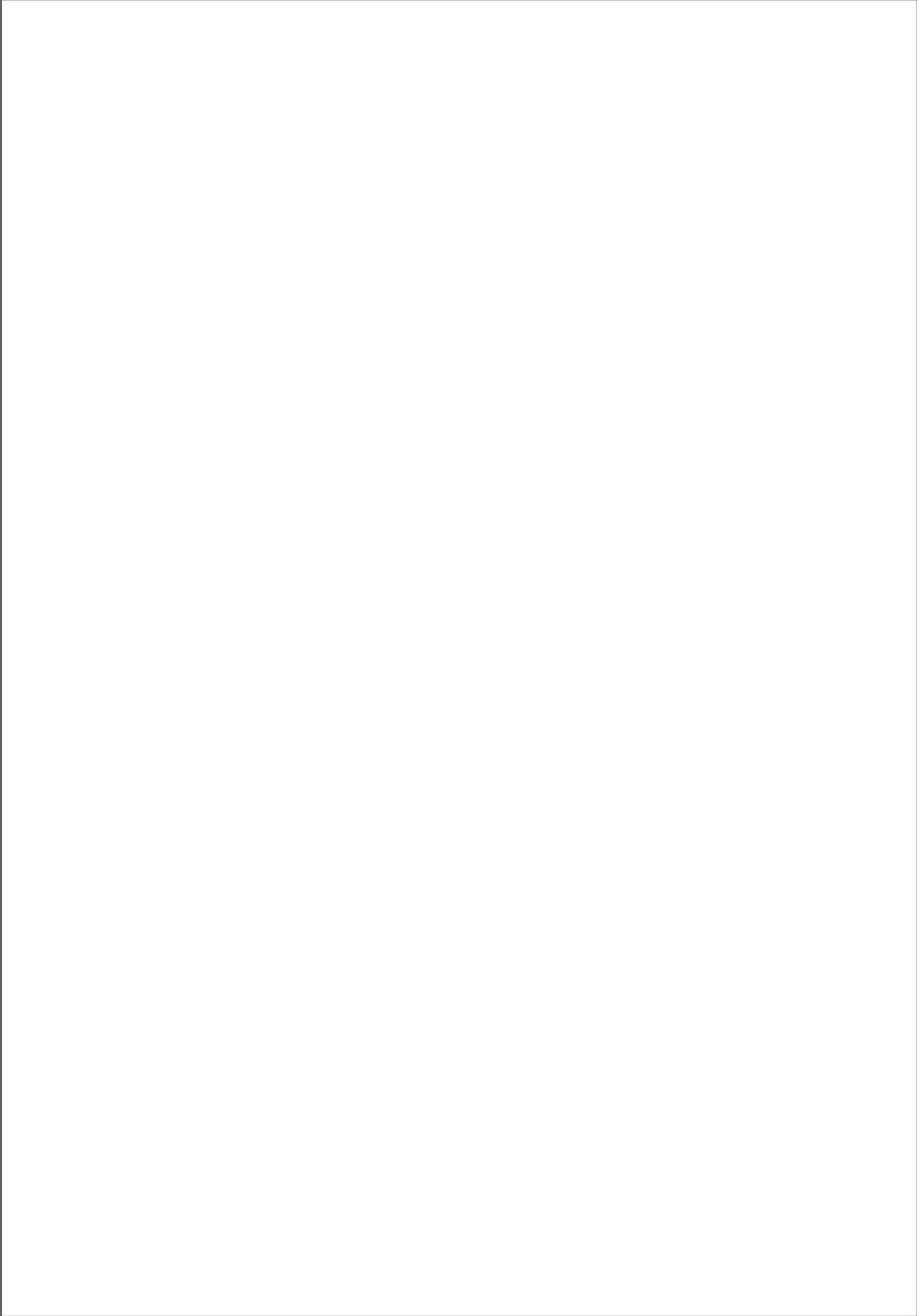
Name of card holder _____ Card type _____ Ticket/s @ \$35 (qty) _____

Card number

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Card Expiry Date ____/____ Amount (this transaction) AUD\$_____ Signature_____

Contact Number _____





**Vietnam Veterans, Peacekeepers & Peacemakers
Association of Australia (NSW Branch) Inc.**
Affiliated with the Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia Inc



2015 Membership Application / Renewal Form

1st JANUARY to 31ST DECEMBER

SURNAME		FIRST NAME		SECOND NAME	
STREET ADDRESS					
SUBURB				STATE	POST CODE
HOME PHONE		MOBILE PHONE		WORK PHONE	
SERVICE NUMBER		SERVICE UNIT		OVERSEAS AREA OF OPERATION SERVICE	
NEXT OF KIN		RELATIONSHIP		NEXT OF KIN CONTACT PHONE	

ITEM	NUMBER of YEARS	COST	TOTAL
MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION		@ \$30.00 PA	\$
DONATION	ONE OFF	NOMINATE AMOUNT	\$
RAFFLE TICKET(S)		@ \$2.00 PER TICKET	\$
MERCHANDISE ITEM NUMBER	QUANTITY	ITEM PRICE *	
			\$
			\$
			\$
			\$
TOTAL AMOUNT DUE		*Item prices available on-line, or opposite, or in office.	\$

<p>PAYMENT OPTION Payment may be made by Credit Card, (phone or post), Cheque, Money Order, or by cash if paying in person. Make all Cheques & Money Orders payable to: VVPPAA (NSW BRANCH) Inc. Post to: PO BOX 170 GRANVILLE 2142 Contact the Granville Office on 02 9682 1788 for advice. Email: secretary@vfvgranville.org</p>	<p>PAYMENT METHOD (CIRCLE ONE ONLY) CASH CHEQUE MONEY ORDER MASTERCARD VISA</p>	
	<p>CARDHOLDER NAME (PRINT)</p>	
	<p>CREDIT CARD NUMBER</p>	
	<p>EXPIRY DATE</p>	<p>TRANSACTION AMOUNT</p>
<p>YOUR EMAIL CONTACT ADDRESS:</p>		
<p>SIGNATURE</p>		

OFFICE USE ONLY

RECEIPT DATE:	MEMBERSHIP CARD No.:
RECEIPT No. MEMBERSHIP:	RECEIPT No. DONATION:

The government won't fix it — 3

The Dysfunctional Appeals System from Repatriation Medical Authority Decisions

(The Repatriation Commission defends a system rife with dysfunction and red tape)

The Repatriation Medical Authority (RMA) decides on the causes of illnesses.

These causes are published in what are called, Statements of Principle.

These are referred to when, claiming his or her illness is war or service caused, a veteran applies for compensation.

When the RMA publishes a Statement of Principle listing the possible causes of a particular illness, its accuracy can be challenged. This most often happens if the challenger believes a particular cause has been left out.

For instance, the Vietnam Veterans Federation challenged the omission of 'smoking' as a cause of Prostate Cancer.

These challenges are in the form of appeals to a body called the Specialist Medical Review Council (SMRC). It comprises a number of appropriate specialists brought together to consider the evidence.

But the SMRC can only consider the evidence that was before the RMA when it made

the original decision, regardless of how much more evidence has become available in the mean time.

In the case of our appeal against the RMA's omission of 'smoking' as a cause of Prostate Cancer, there were six years between the RMA original decision and the SMRC appeal hearing. And during that time a lot of new evidence emerged. The Repatriation Commission claims these time gaps are being reduced but our most recent appeal (on PTSD) still took a couple of years to be heard. The truth is, even 'quick' appeals may take years rather than months to hear.

Other reviewing bodies are not so limited. The Administrative Appeals Tribunal, for instance, *must* have regard to *all* the information that is available

It is common sense that an SMRC decision should similarly be based on the latest and most authoritative information available.

An expensive study by *Grosvenor Management Consultants* commissioned in 2011 by the Repatriation Commission itself, made just

The Repatriation Medical Authority is at the heart of the veterans' compensation system. But appeals from its decisions can be a mess



this recommendation.

The present system is simply wasteful. If the SMRC rejects the appeal on the evidence previously available to the RMA but would have accepted the appeal on all currently available evidence, all it can do is tell the RMA about it. The RMA may then decide to conduct another review but this may add years rather than months to the process. Then if the RMA again finds in the same way, it is likely to be again appealed to the SMRC. This process could be repeated over and over.

Had the SMRC not been forced by red tape to make a judgement based on only that evidence used by the RMA but rather had looked at all available evidence, the matter would have been resolved there and then. Instead the irrational process condemns the appeal to the expensive and time consuming further RMA review and probably another expensive and time consuming gathering of a new SMRC panel.

Round and round...

The Repatriation Commission defends its position with the lame excuse that the legislation demands it happen that way.

But in our several efforts to encourage the Repatriation Commission to see sense, we have included a list of what legislative amendments should be made; a list compiled by a prominent barrister, expert in Repatriation matters.

And the Repatriation Commission is like a speeding bullet changing legislation when it suits them. So why does the Repatriation Commission want to retain this dysfunctional, red tape riddled system. Puzzling indeed.

And that's not the only red tape that blights this process.

In the course of an appeal, if the RMA revokes the appealed Statement of Principle, and replaces it with a new one, the appeal process is terminated.

Instead of the SMRC or the court just continuing the appeal with the new Statement of Principle, the process must start again from the very beginning.

An appeal by the Vietnam Veterans Federation was terminated eight years into the process, and had to be started again from scratch.

The Repatriation Commission gives no rationale for supporting this dysfunction, saying **inane**ly that that's what the legislation requires.

And it employs the old trick of answering questions by telling you what you already know (sometimes at length) but failing to address the issue.

We are weary of it.

What this ridiculous rule means is that the system of SMRC reviews can be unnecessarily wasteful, time consuming, expensive and frustrating for all concerned.

The expensive *Grasvenor* study recommended that the SMRC simply continues the appeal process with the new Statement of Principle.

If it takes legislative amendments to repair these **ridiculously wasteful processes, then do it. That's the Repatriation Commission's job.**

But the Repatriation Commission defends the **indefensible** and the government won't fix it. ■

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

To help us maintain our records please complete this form if your address is different to that on the mailing list or if you are about to move.

Please print clearly

Family Name _____ Given Names _____

Membership No. _____

Signature _____

Old Address: _____

Old Contact Number: _____

New details:

New Address _____

_____ State _____ Post Code _____

New Contact Number: _____

VETERANS MORTALITY REPORT

As you are aware, Vietnam Veterans are dying at a rate higher than while on Active Service. This situation is perhaps a natural phenomenon compared to non-serving members of the public, who might die of an illness which is equally distributed through the population of the same age group.

Vietnam Veterans Peacekeepers & Peacemakers Association of Australia (NSW Branch) Inc has for many years maintained records of the deaths of Vietnam Veterans and the cause of death if known. This has proved invaluable regarding the health standards of Vietnam Veterans when compared to the general public.

We seek your assistance in reporting the death of Vietnam Veterans, past or recent, to allow the Federation to expand and preserve it's record base.

Kindly circulate a copy of this page through your RSL Club, Unit or Corps reunions and meetings and raise it as an issue. The information gained from these reports will greatly assist all Vietnam Veterans and their families regarding future claims for benefits.

Please print clearly

Veterans' Name _____ Service number _____

SVN Unit _____ Tour date(s) _____

Cause of death (if known) _____

(**SR** Service Related **UK** Unknown **S** Suicide **O** Other)

Date of death (if known) _____ Location at time of death (State & Town) _____

Your name _____

Address _____

_____ State _____ Post Code _____

Phone no _____ Signature _____

Please Return To

**The Welfare Officer,
PO Box 170,
Granville, NSW 2142**

Ph **(02) 9682 1788** Fax **(02) 9682 6134**
E-mail to **secretary@vfvagranville.org**



Volunteer Web-site manager urgently needed



“You can’t have a healthy veteran without a healthy family”

The Australian Families of the Military Research and Support Foundation raises money for much needed research into the effect of veterans’ war experience on their families as well as giving support to those in distress.

AFOM has an excellent web-site but needs a volunteer site manager.

The job would involve adding some articles and taking others down as well as minor adjustments and maintenance.

You would be working with AFOM CEO Gail MacDonell OAM, BPsych (Hons), RN, Assoc. MAPS, who is also volunteering her services.

It would not be a burdensome job but it would make a big difference to this excellent organisation.

Contact Gail MacDonell: gailv2@bigpond.com
0412 322 756 ■



The *Families of the Military Research and Support Foundation* raises money for research into helping military families deal with post war life.

Every booking raises funds for this excellent Foundation.

When booking use the code: 1240.

When booking online just go to:

www.quickbeds.com/?grassrootscode=1240

(The VVFA supports this initiative)



YOU STAY, WE PAY!

Every week one lucky person will win a **FULL REFUND.**

The Dust of Uruzgan

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ojwGox3yQOs>

Fred Smith's song for Afghanistan veterans

Uruzgan —no jungle but lots of dust.

Fred Smith has written an iconic song that tells the story of our troops fighting the war in Afghanistan.

Fred was an Australian diplomat working in Afghanistan alongside soldiers from 6 RAR during the northern summer of 2010. He was there when ten soldiers were killed in as many weeks.

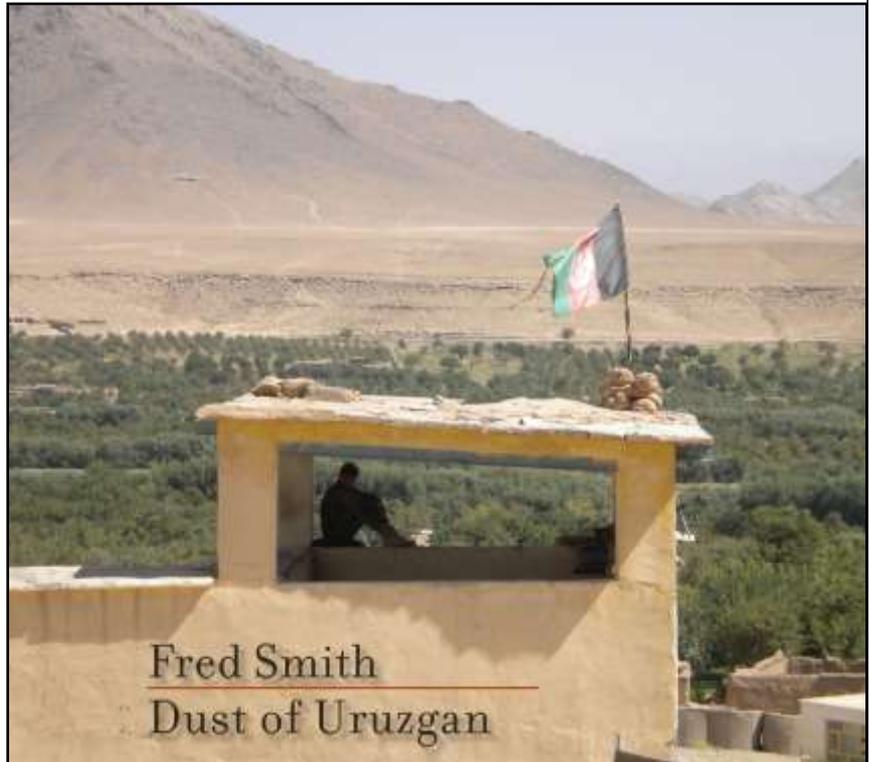
After returning to Australia, Fred wrote *The Dust of Uruzgan* as well as another song *Derapet* following a Brisbane soldier's request to honour his mate Jaryd "Crash" McKinney killed at the now famous Battle of Derapet.

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HNFa_EsFpaQ)

And that's not all.

Fred is a talented song writer who performs his songs round Australia. He is a favourite on the festival circuit.

Check out his other albums at:
WWW.FREDSMITH.COM.AU



Fred working in Afghanistan with Baluchi tribal leader

Stop Press

Next of Kin offered the repatriation of Vietnam war dead from Malaysia

The next of kin will be offered the repatriation of Vietnam war dead from Terendak Military Cemetery in Malaysia and Kranji War Cemetery in Singapore. Should the next of kin wish, they will be returned to Australia and buried with full military honours and at government expense.

In our November 2014 edition we published an article arguing for the repatriation of our war dead.. We argued that because of policy confusion and inconsistency, most of our war dead were returned to Australia whilst others, twenty five in total, were not.. This was an injustice for the next of kin wishing their loved one returned but not given that option.

The government has responded.

They will be returned to Australia next year.

How it happened

From the beginning of Australia's participation in the Vietnam War till January 1966 the government did not automatically repatriate our war dead to Australia. Rather they were interred in the Terendak Military Cemetery (with one buried in Kranji War Cemetery) unless next of kin asked and were able and willing to pay the high cost of their return and funeral.

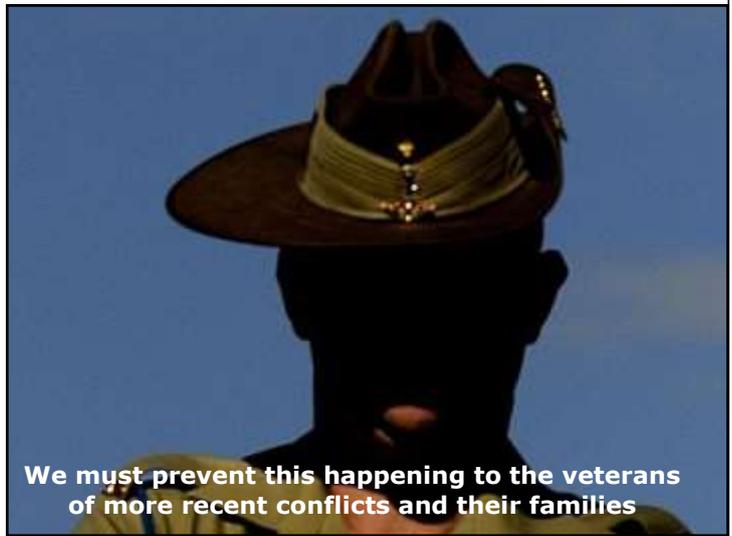
In January 1966 the policy changed. From then, Vietnam War dead were automatically returned to Australia unless the next of kin wished otherwise.

Injustice remedied

That injustice will now be remedied.

The offer will also be made to the families of other servicemen and dependants buried at Terendak Military Cemetery. ■

New alarming study on the 'suicidality' of Vietnam veterans and their wives



First, what is 'suicidality'?
The components of 'suicidality' are: 'thinking about suicide', 'planning suicide' and 'attempting suicide'.

There is previous research done on the 'completed suicides' of Vietnam era National Servicemen showing lower rates than the general population (because of the 'healthy soldier effect') but higher rates amongst those who served in Vietnam compared with those who stayed in Australia. It showed that fighting a war increases the risk of suicide. (see the lead article on page 7)

But researching the 'suicidality' of Vietnam veterans and their wives gives a better indication of the problem than researching only completed suicides because Coroners' courts are reluctant to attribute death to suicide if there is any doubt, leading to understated statistics.

In addition researching 'suicidality' gives an indication of the overall trauma suffered.

The study was done by well known researcher of veterans' issues, Dr Brian O'Toole of the University of Sydney Brain & Mind Research Institute.

So what were the findings?

The risk of 'thinking about', 'planning' and 'attempting' suicide amongst Vietnam veterans is 7.9, 9.7 and 13.8 times higher than their peers in the general population. Risk amongst wives is 6.2, 3.5 and 6 times higher.

In such studies an increased risks of say 0.5 is considered significant. So these figures are tragically huge.

Combined with a previous verified study showing the children of Vietnam veterans' risk of

completed suicide has been 3 times their peers in the general population, these statistics paint a heart breaking picture.

Another of the study's findings is that PTSD, depression, alcohol disorders, phobia and agoraphobia were predictors of suicidality amongst veterans while depression, PTSD, social phobia and panic disorder were predictors amongst the wives.

The link between PTSD and suicidality in veterans is notable because it seems *not* to be currently officially accepted (though self evident to those close to the problem).

This tragic situation is in prospect for the veterans and their partners of recent wars unless there is urgent, generous and intelligent intervention.

We hope the government and the Repatriation system are up to the task. ■

Journal of Psychiatric Research xxx (2015) 1-7
www.elsevier.com/locate/psychires

Suicidality in Australian Vietnam veterans and their partners

Brian I. O'Toole a, Tammy Orreal-Scarborough ,Deborah Johnston, Stanley V. Catts , Sue Outram

“The progress of infantry patrolling was in some cases reduced to twenty metres an hour to allow for careful ‘prodding’ and checking for mines. ‘No-go areas’ were identified; one of the most important was in and around the Long Hai Hills – a key enemy base area, defended with M16 mines lifted from the Australian minefield.”

Read on...

The minefield disaster — WHY?

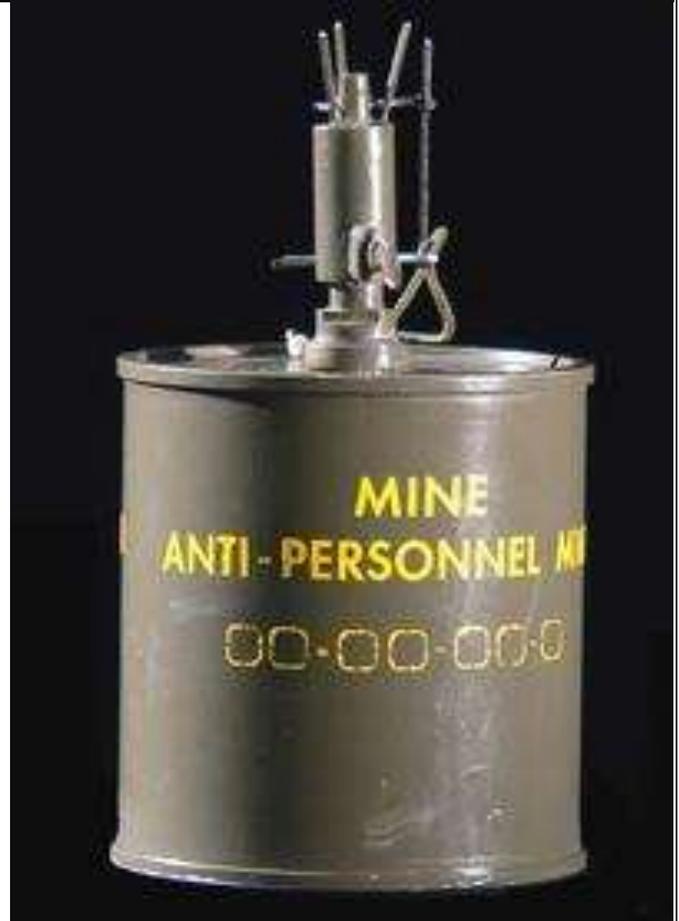
Barrier thinking

The monument and the minefield
by VVFA honorary historian
Dr Greg Lockhart

In Vietnam, mines accounted for half of the Second Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (2RAR) soldiers killed in action. Two of those killed on mines were among the nine South Australian members of the Battalion who died on active service, and who are listed on the memorial in Adelaide that was dedicated to them in April 2014.

The invitation, which Tom Young extended to me on behalf of the Battalion Association, was to speak at the dedication on why I wrote my book, *The Minefield: An Australian Tragedy in Vietnam* (Allen & Unwin, 2007). It was indeed an honour, and I became all the more mindful of that tribute when Tom, who worked for some three years on the memorial project, sadly died a few weeks before he could see it realised. In Australian culture, memorials have long tended to have a dual function. They are sites of remembrance for everyone; but for the families of the fallen and members of the wider unit family, they are also sites of sorrow. Grieving for loved ones and mates may be eased over time, but will never end.

People reserve a special kind of pride in, and sorrow for, those whose lives are tragically cut short by war. The fact that their names are embossed on metal and set in stone shows that their lives and deaths were special. Tom Young believed this. And so it makes sense to imagine that those who pass this monument a hundred years from now will still read the names and

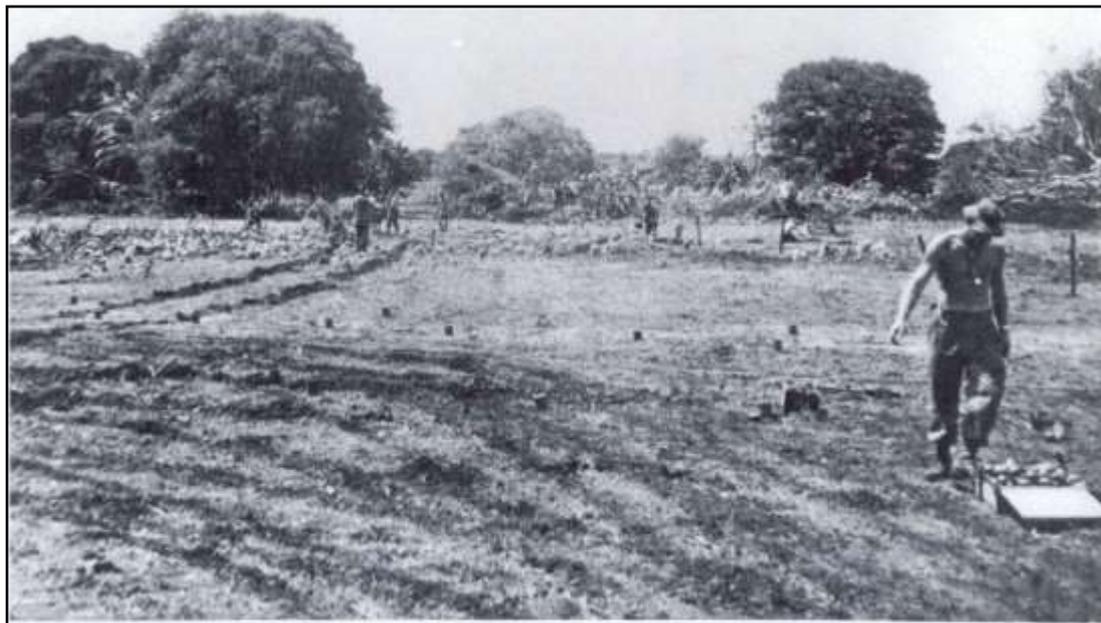


imagine that they must have belonged to special people – or ordinary people who did special things.

In that sense, I can now answer Tom's question by saying that I wrote *The Minefield* in order to make a memorial for Vietnam veterans. Not one set in stone, although I hope that the weight of the research might make it as durable. The memorial I had in mind was a story that would give Australian Vietnam veterans, and others interested in their war, an independent context in which readers could judge for themselves what happened.

To do that, I chose to write about the minefield. At the time I began my research, 'mining' was still thought to be a subsidiary form of warfare and was, without doubt, a darkly unglamorous one. In the Second World War, land mines had been used in a defensive role.

Large 'barrier' and 'defensive' minefields were laid to channel, block or impede armour and infantry assaults. In Vietnam, the Australian approach to mine warfare had not significantly changed. Yet



the small-scale, irregular dimension to the war in Vietnam would have unforeseen consequences for a large 'barrier' minefield laid there by First Australian Task Force (1ATF) in mid 1967, consequences that, though increasingly perceived by members of the force as calamitous, were still not clearly understood twenty years after the war.

Beginning in the late 1990s, The Vietnam Veterans' Federation – led by Tim McCombe, who was seriously wounded on a mine with 2RAR in 1967 – had been dealing with veterans who had been similarly wounded and asking questions about 'the minefield'. These questions, which revolved around the fact that the enemy had been able to enter the minefield, lift the mines and use them against 1ATF, remained unanswered. As I looked into the issue, I became convinced of the need to bring 'the minefield' out of the historical shadows. Far from being a secondary form of warfare, it became clear that the mine battle associated with that minefield epitomised Australia's involvement in Vietnam.

The minefield was a projection onto the battlefield of the barrier mentality that established Australia's strategic

settings in relation to Asia in the 1960s. The 1ATF was deployed to Vietnam to help establish a strategic barrier against the perceived downward thrust of communism in the region.

In Vietnam, the Nui Dat base was established in central Phuoc Tuy Province as a barrier to protect the main population centres in the south-west of the province from the regular Communist Main Force units entering it from the north-east. The eleven-kilometre barrier minefield, containing twenty thousand powerful M16 mines, was designed as an extension of the barrier base into the south to further protect those population centres, mainly the village of Dat Do.





6Pl/ 5RAR dressing for a night ambush inside the fence at southern Phuoc Loi circa 3 April 1967. The camera looks east from almost Route 44. The soldiers are still in the small, dispersed groups, in which they ate their evening meal. Left to right: Pte Bruce Holland 'blackened up' for the night's work; unknown L/Cpl recording the issuing of the evening's Paludrine anti-malaria pills; Cpl Don Kennedy, also 'blackened up'. Background: the fence turns north around Phuoc Loi. (Photo: Pte Ross Wood)

total of 521 Australians were killed in action in Vietnam. The battle encounters that killed most of those Australians were mine and booby trap incidents, including those on M16s. All up, mines and booby traps claimed 121 lives. Of those, M16 mines lifted by irregular enemy fighters from the minefield killed at least fifty-five members of 1ATF, just under half of the total Australian mine and booby trap fatalities – almost certainly including Lance Corporal RM Woodford, and possibly Private JC

The minefield immediately revealed the fatal flaw in that barrier thinking: The commander who ordered the laying of the minefield, and those superiors who concurred with his plans prior to the mining, had not sufficiently realised that the people he was trying to shield in those villages were also potential enemies. Indeed, village people – initially young women from Dat Do – entered the minefield from the west, from within the villages the minefield was meant to protect. Once in the minefield, these villagers lifted between three and five thousand mines and turned them back against 1ATF. Arming otherwise lightly armed irregular peasant fighters with powerful ordnance caused heavy Australian and allied casualties. The disastrous oversight in the plan could not be clearer: the enemy proved to be on both sides of the intended 'barrier'.

One can criticise the decision to lay the minefield from many angles, but the overriding point is that the Australian commanders of the day did not know who or where their enemy was.

In the second half of the book I attempt to clarify the disaster: the mine incidents, casualties and tactical problems stemming from that astonishing, high-level battlefield ignorance. A

Rivett, who are listed on the Adelaide memorial. The fifty-five soldiers (at least) killed by 'our own' M16 mines compares with the seventy-seven Australians killed in bunker fighting. 'Our own' M16s also killed a further forty-two allied soldiers and civilians – mostly Vietnamese, and a small number of Americans. In sum, M16 mines from the Australian barrier minefield killed at least ninety-seven Australian and allied soldiers, while another four hundred and twenty were wounded – most seriously, and many dismembered as a result of the exploding mines.

Those casualties meant the mine battle was central to 1ATF history. In failing to realise that his enemy included peasants in the villages, and by unwittingly arming them with thousands of M16 mines, the 1ATF commander did something else he had never imagined: facilitate the irregular enemy's radical transformation of mine warfare.

By taking advantage of their extensive surveillance network, the irregular peasant forces were able to move the mines around the battlefield. Through laying and re-laying the mines in the paths of 1ATF patrols, that enemy had transformed the inherently defensive nature

of mine warfare – as Australians understood it – into an essentially offensive strategy. The remarkable fact was that the irregular peasant forces were able to target 1ATF patrols using high explosive mines lifted from the Australian minefield with much the same effect as they would have had if they had been firing artillery. Thus, for example, in the so-called Battle for the Box between 8 May and 15 August 1969, 1ATF's battalions were engaged in something unheard of; a 'deliberate mine battle', in which patrols were under attack with pilfered M16 mines. That attack resulted in 54 per cent of the total thirty-five killed and 141 wounded in 1ATF during the fifteen-week period.

Overall, the rate of M16 mine casualties fluctuated according to many variables, especially time and location. When 1ATF's battalions operated outside Phuoc Tuy Province or in its lightly populated northern area, M16 mine casualties were low, beneath 5 per cent. But when they operated around the main population centres in the province, which the minefield had been laid to protect because they constituted the vital strategic areas, or around vital enemy base areas, the M16 mine casualties rose vertiginously – to over half of the total and could, for short two or three week periods, spike at around 80 per cent. That was what happened in the Battle for the Box. Something similar also happened in the period from 22 February to 28 April 1970, when 1ATF casualties resulting from M16 mines were comparable.

The point is that the laying of the minefield had turned the areas of strategic importance in the Australian province into a vast explosive trap. This meant that the prospect of even higher casualties restricted 1ATF's tactical movement and skewed its operations in those vital areas. The progress of infantry patrolling was in some cases reduced to twenty metres an hour to allow for careful 'prodding' and checking for mines. 'No-go areas' were identified; one of the most important was in and around the Long Hai Hills – a key enemy base area, defended with M16 mines lifted from the Australian minefield. When, belatedly,

the problem was officially acknowledged, a major allocation of men and engineer resources was also necessary to clear the remaining mines from the field between mid-1969 and mid-1970. I imagined the minefield as a metaphor for the incongruity of the Australian barrier strategy in Vietnam, which has never been well understood. The regular big-unit warfare passed down to Australians through



Anzac folklore from the world wars did not jell with the requirements of counter-revolutionary warfare in Vietnam. There, as indicated, the revolutionary strategy involved a complex combination of interacting regular big-unit and irregular small-unit wars, which varied according to circumstances.

In Phuoc Tuy, the Australian decisions to construct the barrier base and barrier minefield arose from strategic assumptions geared for big-unit war against regular enemy main force units. Such big-units sometimes entered Phuoc Tuy, but the Australian barrier assumptions were still unworkable in a province where support for those big-units was widespread in the villages, and irregular small-unit war stemming from them was by far the most common form.

The 1ATF was heavily armed and well trained and, for those reasons, able to fight whatever was in front of it. Operations adapted



courage and persistence in the face of adversity.

The Minefield is a story of strategic self-destruction. My intention was not to mythologise that painful reality; it was rather to carry the story of those who perished and suffered on the minefield and mines generally into the future. Because their suffering went to the heart of the 1ATF's presence and experience in Vietnam, I wanted my book to give them a stake in their own history. In relation to this, the existence in

to small-scale enemy action were the norm; relentless, silent patrolling typically went on in a war without fronts and flanks. Occasionally, the silence was broken by thirty-second contacts. Ambushing was a common 1ATF tactic. More protracted skirmishes, bunker contacts and even larger battles sometimes developed with indecisive outcomes. Meanwhile, for long periods between mid-1967 and mid-1970, the M16 mines kept exploding during 1ATF operations in the vital areas of Phuoc Tuy Province. Like a ribbon of death, that long chain of detonations reminds us that successful tactical adaptation did not necessarily mean strategic comprehension.

In the face of a complex and dangerous no-win situation, the staying power of 1ATF became the obvious silver lining in the story. It remained a disciplined and coherent fighting force until it was withdrawn. Its units continued to fight with tactical prowess and function in the face of the mine terror, each operating for the notably protracted period of a year.

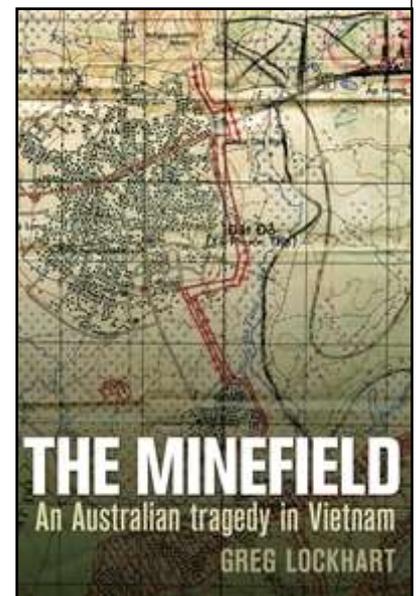
There is no doubt that 1ATF's general resolve was aligned with the inspiring aspects of the Anzac tradition. Although partly conscripted, Australian servicemen in Vietnam were still imbued with the independent egalitarianism and mateship of the Anzacs and its values: loyalty,

Adelaide of a uniquely South Australian memorial reminds us of the strong communal feeling that the dead should rest among the living. ■

This essay was originally delivered as an address at the dedication of the memorial to the South Australian members of The Second Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, who died on active service.

It was published in *Griffith Review 48, Enduring Legacies* and is published here with the kind permission of the *Griffith Review*.

Greg Lockhart is author of *The Minefield: An Australian Tragedy in Vietnam* (Allen & Unwin, 2007), which was shortlisted for the New South Wales Premier's Prize. His essay on the barrier mentality in Australian historiography, 'Absenting Asia', was published in *Australia's Asia: From Yellow Peril to Asian Century* (UWA Publishing, 2012). He is also the author of the essay 'Race fear, dangerous denial', in *Griffith Review 32: Wicked Problems, Exquisite Dilemmas*.



The Buzz

There's still a buzz around the amount of money being spent on the ANZAC Centenary commemorations. No one is saying they should not take place. But to some veterans, \$400 million seems excessive when the government cries too poor to provide a few hundred here and there for child care for young mums visiting the VVCS or the repair of the crippled Veterans Children's Education Scheme. Then there's the downgrading of the quality of hearing aids under SRCA, the ceasing of the three month backdating of veterans disability pensions, the Federal government withdrawing its share of an agreement with the States to fund Service pensioners concessions for travel, electricity, phone and council rates, and so on and so on.

Perhaps, some veterans are suggesting, \$200 million should be plenty for commemoration (after all the UK has allocated only \$90 million and Canada nothing). The rest could be used to end the incessant cuts to veterans' benefits.

There's a buzz too about DVA offices closing in regional areas and veterans having to line up at Centrelink offices even if it is to see DVA or DVA trained staff.

Dissatisfaction too is being aired about the time it is taking for claims to be processed. There have been un-kept promises from the Repatriation Commission for years about how they are going to get on top of the problem.

We are keeping our ear to the ground to pick up the buzz. ■

OUTREACH PROGRAM PENSION TOURS

Our Outreach Program continues to be extremely successful in reaching out to Veterans, service and ex-service community living in regional and/or remote areas.

Any Veteran, widow of a Veteran, and/or relative of a Veteran in rural NSW, seeking assistance of the Outreach Team in matters of Service Pensions, Disability Pension Claims, War Widow Pensions, and/or MCRS Claims, etc., should contact the *OUTREACH COORDINATOR* (below) , who will organise assistance.

In the event that members have friends who need assistance they are urged to contact Dennis Hanmer OAM who will coordinate the visit program. Of course, the more people wishing assistance in any one town or rural area, the more fulfilling the trip will be for the team.

Remember, we assist all Veterans, and service and ex-service personnel, in any matter relating to your service that may require the lodgement of a claim or application with DVA..

The team will provide assistance and advice to ALL Veterans of ALL conflicts, including Peacekeeping and Peacemaking deployments. ALL personnel who served in the Armed Forces between 1973 and 1993

ARE YOU ELIGIBLE FOR REPATRIATION BENEFITS? OUR SERVICES ARE FREE.

Contact: Dennis Hanmer OAM (JP)
Mob: 0428 388 221 Ph: 02 9682 1788
Fax: 02 9682 6134
Email: secretary@vfvfgranville.org
Mail: VVPPAA (NSW Branch) Inc.,
PO Box 170, Granville. 2142

Was the Vietnam Veterans Family Study a waste of time?

The study comes up with only one definite conclusion; that the children of Vietnam veterans suffer a markedly higher incidence of psychological problems especially PTSD.

This is hardly ground breaking news.

There is certainly important confirmation that one pathway to the children's psychological problems is through the fathers' PTSD, but this too is hardly a revelation.

The incidence of other health problems were calculated but, because the illnesses were relatively rare and a large enough group of participants had not been assembled, the resulting statistics lacked significance. Indeed it could be said that after all that time, all that work and all that money, the study produced very little of value.

This statistical lack of significance was particularly disappointing in the case of the pregnancy problem of miscarriage, stillbirth, babies born with spina bifida, and babies born with a cleft lip and/or palate, problems identified as problems in previous studies. It was similarly disappointing in the case of suicide, a problem identified and confirmed in previous studies.

There were other important questions simply not addressed by this study.

- How do these finding impact on past studies?
- And what of the partners?

The question is, why embark on a study using numbers that would not produce more definite results. ■

Full study at: http://www.dva.gov.au/sites/default/files/consultation%20and%20grants/healthstudies/vvfs/vvfs_vol1.pdf

Saved by the Senate



The government has, for now, given up its attempt to downgrade the indexation of the TPI, General Rate Pensions, Invalidity Service Pension, Age Service Pension, War Widows Pension, Income Support Supplement, wholly dependent partner payment and the equivalent MRCA payments.

The reason is not that the government has had a change of heart, it is just that the majority of Senators would have voted against the necessary legislation.

So we can thank those Senators who made it clear they would vote against the downgrading.

They are the Labor Senators, the Greens Senators, Independent Senator Jacqui Lambie and we think Independent Senator Nick Xenophon, and several other cross-benchers.

We thank them. The downgrading would have, over time, caused those pensions to fall further and further behind community income standards. ■

Letters

From Senator Peter Whish-Wilson

Mr Bill Roberts OAM JP
Acting National President
Vietnam Veterans' Association of Australia

Dear Mr Roberts

Re: the use of the Australian War Memorial by weapons manufacturers

I am writing to seek your view on an issue that has recently come to my attention.

On Tuesday 2 December 2014 the (then) Minister for Defence, David Johnson, launched the Australian division of Northrop Grumman at the Australian War Memorial.

Northrop Grumman is considered to be one of the five largest weapons manufacturers in the world.

I was concerned to learn that this company — a company that profits directly from war — was allowed to ‘celebrate’ its launch at the Australian War Memorial.

On 25 February 2015, I raised these concerns with the Director of the Australian War Memorial, Dr Brendan Nelson, at a Senate Committee hearing.

Dr Nelson responded that corporate use of the war memorial was “an important part of our revenue raising.” Successive governments have reduced funding to the war memorial, which appears to have encouraged the war memorial to seek funding from other sources.

One of the founding fathers of the Australian War Memorial, Charles Bean, said the war memorial should “avoid perpetuating enmity ... because those who have fought in wars are generally strongest in their desire to prevent war.”

I agree with Mr Bean’s sentiments. Like many Australians, I believe the war memorial is a sacred place. A photo of my children’s great-grandfather sits in the Sandakan room as a stark reminder to my family of the sacrifice and hardship of war.

For these reasons I am writing to the Vietnam Veterans' Association of Australia to seek your views on the use of the war memorial by weapons manufacturers, and the war memorial’s reliance on funding from weapons manufacturers.

I would be more than happy to discuss these matters with you, either over the phone or in person.

Yours sincerely

Senator Peter Whish-Wilson

Editor’s Note: Senator Whish-Wilson spent several years in the Australian Army before becoming an economist and wine-maker.

To the Minister for Veterans Affairs

Senator the Hon Michael Ronaldson
Minister for Veterans Affairs
Parliament House

CANBERRA ACT 2605

7 May 2015

Dear Minister,

We note that the government has decided to subsidise child care for those on high incomes because the priority is getting women to re-enter the workforce.

We note that counting a veteran’s partner’s income when calculating a veteran’s Invalidity Service Pension dissuades many women from re-entering the workforce.

We would ask, therefore, that partner’s earned income be excluded from that calculation.

Yours sincerely

Bill Roberts OAM

Acting National President



AUSTRALIAN VETERANS'
CHILDREN ASSISTANCE TRUST

SCHOLARSHIPS

**FOR THE CHILDREN & GRANDCHILDREN
OF AUSTRALIAN VETERANS**



The Australian Veterans' Children Assistance Trust (AVCAT) is a not-for-profit organisation. AVCAT administers bursaries and scholarships to help children, and in some cases grandchildren, of Australian veterans with the costs of full-time education. The most deserving candidates are provided with financial assistance to facilitate their tertiary studies.

"It means the world to me that someone I don't know cares about my education and believes I have potential."
2014 Recipient

One of the scholarships administered by AVCAT is the VVPPAA Scholarship, specifically available for the children and grandchildren of Vietnam Veterans.

If you would like to find out more about this or any of the sponsored scholarships that AVCAT administers, please contact us:

P: 02 9213 7999 E: avcat@dva.gov.au W: www.avcat.org.au

APPLICATIONS OPEN 18th AUGUST

**ARE YOU ELIGIBLE FOR
A SCHOLARSHIP?
DO THE ELIGIBILITY TEST
NOW!
(See opposite)**

ARE YOU ELIGIBLE TO APPLY FOR A SCHOLARSHIP OR BURSARY THROUGH AVCAT?



Are you a child or grandchild of an Australian veteran?
 YES Go to Question 2. NO You are NOT eligible!

Are you an Australian permanent resident?
 YES Go to Question 3. NO You are NOT eligible!

Are you enrolled or planning to enrol in tertiary studies for a minimum of one year?
 YES Go to Question 4. NO You are NOT eligible!

Will you be studying full-time next year?
 YES Go to Question 5. NO You are NOT eligible!

Are you or will you be eligible for Centrelink's Youth Allowance?
 YES Go to Question 6. NO See Note 1 below.

Are you under 25 yrs of age? NO See Note 2 below.
 YES

Please contact AVCAT for more information.

NOTES:

1. Scholarships are awarded to those students in disadvantaged circumstances as determined by the means test eligibility for Youth Allowance. You need to be eligible for Youth Allowance even if not receiving it.
2. if you are older than 25 years you will need to explain the reasons for your delay in tertiary studies.



To find out more please feel free to contact AVCAT:

P: 02 9213 7999 or
 E: avcat@dva.gov.au
 or go our website: www.avcat.org.au

A MESSAGE FROM THE NSW BRANCH

Once again we say THANK YOU to our many members who have made a financial donation to their State Branch.

Without these donations we would find it much more difficult to cater to the needs of our war veterans, service and ex-service persons generally.

Periodically, we will publish a list of individual NSW Branch donors of amounts of \$200 or more. Whilst ALL donations are gratefully received, and combined are of enormous assistance to us, they are too numerous to list.

Donors to the NSW Branch of \$200 or more since the last Journal were:

- | | |
|--------|----------------------------|
| \$1000 | Amelia Jenkins |
| \$500 | Clarence Valley sub branch |
| | Greg Isolani |
| | Name withheld on request |
| \$370 | Ken Phipps |
| \$300 | Brian Sargeson |
| \$250 | 4RAR/4RAR(CDO) Association |
| \$220 | Name withheld on request |

Whilst the above refers to, mostly, individual donations only, we are also indebted to the many RSL sub-branches and other licensed clubs who generously contribute to our cause.





VVCS - Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service

A service founded by Vietnam veterans

The VVCS – Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service provides counselling and group programs to Australian veterans, peacekeepers and their families. It is a specialised, free and confidential Australia-wide service.

VVCS staff are qualified psychologists or social workers with experience in working with veterans, peacekeepers and their families. They can provide a wide range of treatments and programs for war and service-related mental health conditions including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Veterans Line can be reached 24 hours a day across Australia for crisis support and counselling.
Phone 1800 011 046.*

* Free local call. Calls from mobile or pay phones may incur charges.



1300 924 522

Our programs

Alcohol Drugs Eating disorders
Anxiety Depression Bipolar disorder
Borderline personality disorder
Schizophrenia and psychosis
Veterans services

Wesley Hospital Ashfield and Wesley Hospital Kogarah provide compassionate care for those in need of psychiatric help. The goal of the hospitals is to provide positive outcomes, not only for our patients with a mental illness but also for their family and carers. As centres of excellence within Wesley Mission our Wesley Hospitals have been providing professional and compassionate care for over 60 years.

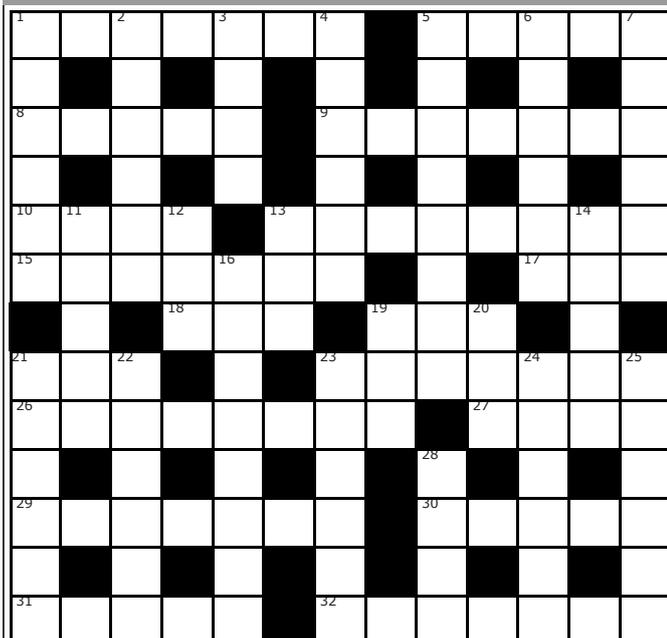
Wesley Hospital Ashfield and Wesley Hospital Kogarah are private psychiatric hospitals which offer both in-patient and day patient services. Our treatment programs combine medication, therapy and include life skills and support networks to ensure recovery is effective, ongoing and enriching.

91 Milton Street,
Ashfield NSW 2131

&

7 Blake Street,
Kogarah NSW 2217

CROSSWORD CORNER



ACROSS

- 1. Jungle knife
- 5. Enchant
- 8. Wanders
- 9. Musical compositions
- 10. Aid in crime
- 13. Control flow
- 15. Spins
- 17. Cover
- 18. Whale school
- 19. A trap
- 21. Group of things
- 23. Started again
- 26. Well learned
- 27. Dreadful
- 29. Cuddle
- 30. Angry
- 31. Smooth and glossy
- 32. Hears

DOWN

- 1. Small Artillery piece
- 2. Ski home
- 3. Direction
- 4. Follows from
- 5. Eats
- 6. Real
- 7. Gave wrong details
- 11. Nodded reverently
- 12. Water valve
- 13. Danger colour
- 14. River (Italy)
- 16. Small axe
- 19. Marry
- 20. New flower
- 21. Cuts
- 22. Trip
- 23. Show
- 24. Desert image
- 25. Puts off
- 28. One-sided view

Solution next issue.

THE UNKOWN COMIC

An Aussie and his little mate were sitting at a bar in Sydney when this huge, burly American guy walks in. As he passes the Aussie, he hits him on the neck knocking him to the floor. The big, burly Yank says, "That's a karate chop from Korea." Well, the Aussie gets back on his barstool and resumes drinking his beer. The burly Yank then gets up to go to the bathroom and, as he walks by the Aussie, he hits him on the other side of the neck and knocks him to the floor. "That's a judo chop from Japan", he says. The Aussie decides he's had enough and leaves. A half hour later he comes back and sees the burly Yank bastard sitting at the bar. He walks up behind him and smacks him on the head, knocking him out. The Aussie says to the bartender, "When he wakes up mate, tell him that was a flamin' crowbar from Bunnings."

After making a successful claim on DVA, Sam was visiting the audiologist. "Yes, he would be able to get free hearing aids supplied by DVA". And the model on offer was shown to him. "I'll try them out then" Sam said. The nurse placed the hearing aids into his ears and hung a wire around his neck. "Does the wire really have to be around my neck?" asked Sam. "Why of course!" replied the nurse. "You think these things in your ears do anything?! It's the wire around your neck – it makes people talk louder!"

MARCH SOLUTION

D	I	S	T	R	E	S	S		C	R	A	B
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S												

BRANCH LISTINGS NSW SUB-BRANCHES

BRANCH LISTINGS OTHER STATES

REUNIONS, COMMEMORATIONS, NOTICES



Last Post





Last Post





Last Post



But each one, man by man, has won imperishable praise!

Each has won a glorious grave - not that sepulchre of earth wherein they lie, but the living tomb of everlasting remembrance wherein their glory is enshrined. Remembrance that will live on the lips, that will blossom in the deeds of their countrymen the world over. For the whole earth is the sepulchre of heroes. Monuments may rise and tablets be set up to them in their own land, but on far-off shores there is an abiding memorial that no pen or chisel has traced; it is graven, not on stone or brass, but on the living heart of humanity. Take these men for your example. Like them, remember that prosperity can be only for the free, that *freedom* is the sure possession of those alone who have courage to defend it. Pericles

We make every endeavour to ensure the accuracy of all names published in "The Last Post". If any omission or error has been made we apologise unreservedly...please contact the editor if you feel an error has been made.

OPERATION Life



REGISTER NOW!!

Phone Veterans and Veterans Counselling Service
on 1800 011 046 or 9761 5000

Operation *Life* workshops' emphasis is on suicide prevention - they aim to help members of the veteran community to recognise someone who might be having thoughts of suicide and to link them in with appropriate help. There are three types of workshops:

- Suicide alertness for everyone: (*Safetalk*) - half day presentation.
- Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training: (*ASIST*) - Two-day skills training
- Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training Tune-up: (*ASIST Tune Up*) - half day refresher workshop

Workshops are open to people who are concerned about veterans, their family, friends or mates in the veteran community. Welfare, pension officers and other helpers from ex-service organisations and the veteran community are encouraged to attend



Veterans & Veterans Families Counselling Service
A service founded by Vietnam Veterans

MEMBER DISCOUNTS

The following businesses are offering discounts to members of The Vietnam Veterans Federation.

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