



DUTY SERVED

Official Journal of ISPA
Incorporation No. Y246 5221

C.F.N. 15588

All enquiries regarding
advertising should be
directed to the Publisher

**Borderline Publishing
Pty Ltd**
PO Box 193
Waverley NSW 2024
ABN 93 083 407 050

Tel: (02) 9389 6387
Fax: (02) 9389 6821
Email:
dutyserved1@bigpond.com

Cover

Caribou A4-140 taxies in for the
last time. (picture courtesy Dept of
Defence)

Presidents Report	3
Vice President	4
Defence Honours & Awards Tribunal	6
Veterans Pensions: Defence Widows	10
Unique Nature of ESO's	12
Consultative Forums	15
Questions on Notice	17
Military Superannuation Indexation	18
Veterans Affairs (Misc Measures) Bill 2009	22
SA Memorial Dedication	23
Media Releases	25
DVA Annual Report	28
Mil Comp Review Transcript	33
Letters	38
PMAC	39
Membership Form	41

ISPA Office Hours: Monday - Wednesday - Friday
10.30am - 3.30pm

DISCLAIMER...

All articles in this Journal are printed on the understanding that unless stated, they are the original work of the contributors or the authors and are not necessarily those of the Editorial Staff or of the Publisher. Editorial and advertising material will be accepted for publication on the condition that it does not defame any person.

Editorial staff accept no responsibility for accuracy of material submitted for publication but every effort will be made to verify information. Editorial Staff reserve the right to reject, edit and re-arrange any item submitted for publication. Articles and letters must be signed and should contain a contact telephone number to enable staff to check authenticity.

NOTICE TO ADVERTISERS TRADE PRACTICES ACT 1974

Advertisers are reminded that the Trade Practices Act 1974 provides severe penalties for false and misleading advertising.

It is not possible to check the accuracy of claims and quality of service offered by advertisers and therefore the responsibility must lie with the person or companies submitting material for publication in their advertisements.

Behind the President's Desk

G'day members and readers to the summer 2009 edition. One of the problems of having only 3 editions a year is that some of the issues can be a couple of months old and not necessarily in the news anymore. The other thing about that is, is some people may be unaware of the issue.

I attended the first Current and Former Members of the ADF - Emerging Issues Forum in November 2009. This was one of Alan Griffins election policies to review and restructure the consultation processes with the ex-service community. It will be an interesting 2010 seeing how these forums function and whether anything is different from past forums, especially when it comes to the feedback to the ex-service community.

I would like to make some comments about some of this edition's articles and in particular how they provide supporting examples of inconsistencies and let downs of a wide range of veterans and peacetime ex-service peoples ongoing issues.

Military Superannuation Indexation.

This government has again neglected the military superannuation indexation issue. There is an acknowledgement that the CPI is not a realistic measure of the rise of the cost of living and have adjusted all pensions to be indexed by the Pensioner and Beneficiary Living Cost Index. All pensions except the military superannuation pensions.

Why won't the Minister for Finance and Deregulation Lindsay Tanner MP join everyone else and acknowledge defence superannuates are being left behind financially? Read his excuse in the article.

Could this be used as the next election policy?

Media Watch

A number of articles are about Breeanna Till's statement at the military compensation review public forum at Warwick Farm NSW. It's amazing how issues and comments can be distorted and mis-quoted. Read them with a grain of salt and also take note of the family's statement.

Senator Mark Bishop made a statement which I believe is close to the mark on financial support to defence widows. Read the veterans pension defence widows article.

Defence Honours & Awards Tribunal

There have been a number of reviews instigated since the last edition of 'Duty Served' as well as reports. These are listed here courtesy of the tribunal. All previous reports can be found on the tribunal's website at <http://www.defence-honours-tribunal.gov.au/>.

I would again like to register my protest against all submissions being made confidential. I think I represent most serving and ex-serving men and women when I say all submissions should be made public. What are people or ESO's hiding.

There may be disagreement but that's expected. Maybe people would leave the ESO if they knew what their ESO was submitting.

Mike Kelly MP who has the responsibility for defence honours and awards in his role as parliamentary secretary for Defence Report has refused the ISPA's request for the DH&AT to review the establishment of an appropriate medallion/cross for the next of kin of ADF personnel killed whilst serving.

I know there are many families who have lost love ones and would appreciate a token of gratitude from the government.

More about this in the magazine.

DVA Annual Report

This is a straight forward annual report revealing the number of various claims, reviews and appeals. There are a couple of items that need questioning though.

Firstly, the critical error rate of 20% for incapacity payments and other compensation payments under the SRCA. This means that 20 out of 100 people have been stuffed around. The types of errors aren't listed but where incapacity payments are concerned, this could mean the difference of house, car, phone, rent or electricity bills being paid or not. Families relying on fortnightly payments have every right to be angry, especially when told of over payments that were not the claimants fault.

Sorry isn't going to pay the mortgage or food bill, especially when money must be paid back.

The 20% critical error rate also applied to the MRCA. But there shouldn't be any surprises there since the MRCA has a different payment system to the VEA. When claimants and delegates have to separate war caused conditions from peacetime caused conditions and then apply an equation that involves offsetting any previously claimed conditions. I'm surprised the critical error rate isn't at least 30%.

The 2001-2002 annual report showed a critical error rate of 5% for incapacity, lump sum payments and liability acceptance and 2% critical error rate for delivery of medical, rehabilitation and other related services.

This huge gap can only be attributed to the closure of the Canberra and Tasmanian MCRS offices and relocation of those files to Melbourne. Add to that a reduction of staff numbers and the pressure to finalize case file and hey presto critical errors.

Medical, rehabilitation and other services under the SRCA had a critical error rate of 22% while under the MRCA there was a critical error rate of 26%. Really instills confidence in the system doesn't it?

The second item relates to the use of SoP's in MRCA claims, which also applies to the VEA.

Whilst DVA provide a list of the top 15 most frequently claimed disabilities under the MRCA SoP's, there is no distinction of those accepted and rejected of war caused or peacetime service caused conditions.

Christmas

On behalf of the executive I wish all our members and their families a very merry and safe Christmas. I thank you for your support over the year and remind you to use

the businesses of those who advertise with us in our magazine.

I ask that you take a moment on Christmas day to remember those ADF persons deployed overseas and working as we enjoy the day with family and friends.

If you feel a bit down and sad over Christmas and need to talk to someone then contact a mate or ring **Lifeline: 13 11 14** - 24hrs or **Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636**.

Ray Brown

It's Grouse Down South

What the Media Say and Show

In mid October 2009, an interesting discussion was raised by a Melbourne Radio Station Presenter. He raised the fact that Australians are unaware of how many Soldiers have been injured whilst serving in Afghanistan. We are aware that by October 2009 the Australian Army have tragically had 11 Soldiers killed and I believe that this Radio Presenter was quoting from an Australian newspaper, telling us that we have had 83 ADF members injured.

I am pleased that this issue was brought to our attention, however once again the details of ADF members injured or killed during Peacetime Training does not receive the same media coverage as ADF members injured or killed during Operations. As ISPA Members, I know that we realise which type of ADF service is more spectacular for the media, however more so, whenever ADF members are unfortunately injured, or tragically killed during their service, this is Classified Information.

Of course, this Radio Presenter had his Internet Site full of many, many messages from his listeners, giving their best wishes and praise for our ADF members serving in Afghanistan. I read through several messages sent by people from the Australian Army and I am sure that they know that Peacetime Training is realistic and tough.

Supported Accommodation

In June and September 2009, I spent some time in Supported Accommodation in Victoria. I went into Respite Care at three different locations, due to my current medical condition and the fact that my parents Bill and Alva had to have a short rest, visiting my brother James and his family in NSW.

I enjoyed Respite Care at 'Liberty House' in Heidelberg, 'Greenhills' in Loch and also at 'Sandalwood' in Frankston. The Carers who worked in all locations were brilliant and I got along extremely well with all of them. For example, I was woken up at 5.30 am each morning by a Carer, I was given my morning medication and we both enjoyed a mug of coffee whilst sitting on a veranda. The weather was always pleasant and I kept warm by wearing my jumper.

During discussions I had with the majority of the Carers, I let them know about ISPA and how we work to achieve better treatment for ADF members injured during Peacetime Training. The Carers were extremely interested, asking me various questions and were

impressed that when we deal with DVA and MRCG we are not aggressive. I made the point that in certain situations; we relate to certain DVA documents, point out discrepancies and come up with factual solutions.

I got along well with the other Supported Accommodation Residents, otherwise referred to as Clients. They all had interesting life experiences and our thought provoking conversations were fascinating.

I did become aware of something anybody with a physical or mental condition must never do. Regardless of whatever this person's medical condition is, they must never make it seem worse than it actually is. When this person deals with health professionals who specialise in various fields, this person will be caught out, guaranteed. There is then a probability that any future medical claim they make will be massively scrutinized. This is definitely not how any of us can achieve what we desire.

Signing Various Forms

In mid October 2009, I had yet another appointment with my local GP. His name is Paul and he is a top bloke. This time I was accompanied by my Melbourne City Mission Case Manager, Melissa. She definitely 'has her finger on the pulse' and she brought along several forms we wanted Paul to complete and sign. He did this without question, however as a fair bit of time was done with this administration, he didn't have an opportunity to do anything medical on me.

The first group of forms were from the Department of Human Services, or DHS from the Victorian State Government. My GP had to complete all of the details about my current medical condition, which he already had on file. I could hear his pen writing away furiously, which must be why Doctors have a muscular writing arm.

I actually look forward to what DHS can provide me. It will only be as good as I am prepared to make it, so I'll soon find out. Looking through their website, they provide services to various medical conditions, with my interest being with disabilities. These will provide support to Victorians with intellectual, physical, sensory, neurological impairments and acquired brain injuries.

It is superb that my Case Manager and local GP are prepared to support my different claims, be they to DVA [MRCG], State Government and home support.

Victorian DHS's website is: www.dhs.vic.gov

The second group of forms was for my Companion Card. Once again, Paul had to complete my medical conditions and attach his personal letter of support. He had to sign these forms and also my passport photos, which I had taken of me just before this appointment.

I will be pleased when I receive my Companion Card, as this will be my only real form of identification. As those of us who fall under SRCA realise, we don't have anything like DVA Gold or White Cards, so our personal identification is, at times difficult to come by. Whenever I display my Companion Card, it will mean my companion carer is legitimate and will ensure we are either not charged, or get reduced rates, e.g. Train, Bus or Tram fares.

As my Companion Card would display one of my photos, I ensured my face was expressionless; with me just gazing at the camera. I remember with Australian Army Identification Card, I did see examples of angry looking faces, as some of the Soldiers I knew were either happy or angry and no expression in-between.

My Motivational Speaking

SO far in 2009 I have presented motivational talks at various locations, to a wide range of audiences. I am pleased when I am invited to talk by School Principal's, Commanding Officers and a Victorian based Medical Association.

I always wear my ISPA Lapel Badge whenever I present my talks and during each talk I tell each audience about ISPA, how we assist ADF member's injured during Peacetime Service and a few ways we go about this.

This year I have spoken with Year 9 and also with Grade 5 young male Students at Penleigh and Essendon Grammar School, to approx 120 new RAAC Troopers at the School of Armour and also to approx 60 Staff Cadets at Melbourne University Regiment. Amongst these Troopers and also Staff Cadets were their NCO and Officer DS, so I had to ensure my style of talking covered a broad range of interests.

In mid September 2009, I was invited to present a short talk by the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD Association, Victoria. There were a few people asked to present a talk and we had to aim our presentation at the parents and friends and at the young people who are now suffering PTSD.

Our presentations were at the Royal Melbourne Zoo, so this provided a perfect location for all of the young kids, their families and friends. During this talk, I spoke about the various adventurous activities I really enjoy; I advertised ISPA and my dad Bill caught my talk on cam-corder.

I constantly remain motivated, dedicated and inspired as these keep me active. For an example I am still getting involved in pushing and pulling weights at the gym, with my Gym Coach Marty watching over me and ensuring I use correct techniques and get the best results.

My family and I would especially like to wish you all a Merry Christmas, season's greetings and I know we will have a successful 2010. All my best

Will
Captain William M Anderson RAAC [Retd]

ISPA National Vice President
Peacetime Injuries

DVA Services During The Christmas-New Year Period

Veterans will be able to access key services throughout the Christmas and New Year period, the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin, said today.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs' offices will close between 5pm on Christmas Eve and 9am Monday 4 January 2010, however key services will continue to be available to the veteran community during this period, including:

- crisis counselling – VVCS–Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service offers 24-hour crisis counselling through *Veterans' Line*. This service is available toll free on **1800 011 046** to veterans and peacekeepers of all conflicts, their families and eligible members of the Defence Force;
- transport – if transport is not booked prior to the Christmas period, it will need to be paid for up-front and reimbursement can be sought from DVA at a later date;
- hospital admissions – doctors can admit DVA patients into hospital and request admissions approval, where required, when DVA re-opens on Monday 4 January 2010;
- Defence Service Homes Insurance – help with policy and claim enquiries is available 24hours a day on **1300 552 662**, while payments can be made on **1300 304 989**, for the cost of a local call or via the website www.dsh.gov.au

Pension pay days will not be affected by the Christmas shutdown arrangements.

"I would also like to take this opportunity to wish all veteran, defence force and ex-service communities and their families, a safe and happy Christmas and New Year," Mr Griffin said.

From DC NSW/ACT

People who require Rehabilitation Appliances Program (RAP) supplies are advised to ensure they have enough supplies to last them through the Christmas New Year period. RAP suppliers will be closed on weekends as well as 25-26 December and 1 January during the Christmas-New Year period. In case of emergency, people should contact their Local Medical Officer or health care professional.

Pension payment dates will not be affected by the closure of DVA offices.

I would appreciate it if you would circulate this information among your members.

On behalf of the Department, I extend my best wishes for the festive season to all members of the veteran, defence force and ex-service communities and their families.

Yours sincerely
Jennifer Collins
Deputy Commissioner NSW / ACT
18 November 2009

Defence Honours & Awards Tribunal

Inquiry into Recognition of Australian Defence Force Service in Somalia between 1992 and 1995

The Defence Honours and Awards Tribunal shall inquire into and report on recognition of Australian Defence Force personnel who served in conjunction with UNOSOM I, UNITAF and UNOSOM II in Somalia, between 1992 and 1995.

In conducting its inquiry the Tribunal shall:

(a) Examine relevant material and make findings with regard to the recognition of 1 Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (1RAR), Group during Operation SOLACE between 10 January 1993 and 21 May 1993, and consider the eligibility of 1RAR for a unit citation for that service;

(b) Consider current policy with regard to Defence honours and awards and make a determination as to the merits of establishing a campaign medal for service in Somalia;

(c) Consider current policy and recognition for Royal Australian Navy service in Somalia between 1992 and 1995, namely service rendered by HMAS Tobruk and HMAS Jervis Bay, and make recommendations as to the adequacy of such recognition; and

(d) Examine any other claims of outstanding recognition for ADF service rendered in Somalia between 1992 and 1995 and make recommendations accordingly.

The Tribunal is to report to the Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Support on its findings in regard to the above and any recommendations that arise from the inquiry.

In making its findings and formulating its recommendations the Tribunal is required to maintain the integrity of the Australian honours and awards system and identify any consequential impact any finding or recommendation may have on that system.

The Tribunal is to determine its own procedures, in accordance with the general principles of procedural fairness, when conducting its inquiry as set out in these Terms of Reference. In this regard, the Tribunal may interview such persons as it considers appropriate and consider material provided to it that is relevant to these Terms of Reference.

Submissions to the Tribunal closed on Monday, 24 August 2009.

Inquiry into recognition for members of the Australian Defence Force for service in Papua New Guinea after 1975

Terms of Reference

The Defence Honours and Awards Tribunal shall inquire into and report on recognition for members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) for service in Papua New Guinea after 16 September 1975.

In conducting its inquiry the Tribunal shall:

(a) have regard to the terms and objectives of the Australian

Service Medal 1945-75 Regulations and the Australian Service Medal Regulations;

(b) consider the claims of ADF members for recognition of their service in PNG after 16 September 1975;

(c) consider any other material relevant to these claims;

(d) consider the possible impact of recognition for ADF service on the recognition of other Australian Government service, such as Australian Federal Police service, in PNG after 1975; and

(e) make findings and recommendations as to the eligibility of ADF members serving in PNG for the ASM or the granting of any other form of recognition for their service.

The Tribunal is to determine its own procedures, in accordance with the general principles of procedural fairness, when conducting its inquiry as set out in these Terms of Reference. In this regard, the Tribunal may interview such persons as it considers appropriate and consider material provided to it that is relevant to these terms of reference.

The Tribunal is to report, in writing, to the Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Support on its findings and recommendations that arise from the inquiry. In making its findings and formulating its recommendations the Tribunal is to arrive at a fair and sustainable response to current and future claims for recognition and also maintain the integrity of the Australian honours system and identify any consequential impact any finding or recommendation may have on that system.

Submissions to the Tribunal closed on Monday, 23 November 2009.

Inquiry into recognition for Defence Force personnel who served as peacekeepers from 1947 onwards

Terms of Reference

The Defence Honours and Awards Tribunal shall inquire into and report on recognition for Defence Force personnel who served as peacekeepers from 1947 to the present.

In particular the Tribunal is to:

(a) examine the relevant evidence and consider the nature and context of peacekeeping service in relation to the criteria for Australian awards;

(b) consider the adequacy of current honours and awards policy and forms of recognition for Defence Force peacekeepers;

(c) consider the claims of Defence Force members for separate additional recognition of peacekeeping service;

(d) consider the possible impact of additional recognition for Defence Force peacekeeping service on the recognition of other Australian Government peacekeeping service such as Australian Federal Police peacekeeping service;

(e) make a determination as to the merits or otherwise of further medallic recognition for Defence Force peacekeepers

The Tribunal is to determine its own procedures, in accordance with the general principles of procedural fairness, when conducting its inquiry as set out in these Terms of Reference. In this regard the Tribunal may interview such persons as it considers appropriate and consider material provided to it that is relevant to these Terms of Reference.

The Tribunal is to report, in writing, to the Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Support on the findings and recommendations that arise from the inquiry. In making its findings and formulating its recommendations the Tribunal is to arrive at a fair and sustainable response to current and future claims for recognition. It is to maintain the integrity of the Australian honours system and identify any consequential impact any finding or recommendation may have on that system.

Submissions to the Tribunal close on Monday, 21 December 2009.

Inquiry Reports

Executive Summary

The Defence Honours and Awards Tribunal was established administratively in July 2008. It inquires into, and in its present role makes recommendations to the Government on, matters referred to it by the Government relating to the granting of honours and awards to serving and former members of the Australian Defence Force.

The Tribunal may consider individual claims to such medals that have been refused by the relevant awarding authority. It may also consider issues of principle relating to Defence service honours and awards.

On 5 September 2008, the Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Support, The Hon Dr Mike Kelly AM MP, requested the Tribunal to inquire into the eligibility of Australian civilian personnel who served in the United States Army Small Ships Section, between 1942 and 1945, to receive Australian or Imperial recognition for that service.

This inquiry was undertaken by the following members of the Tribunal:

Professor Dennis Pearce, AO (Chair)
Mr Adam Bodzioch
Vice Admiral Don Chalmers, AO (Retd)
Dr Jane Harte
Ms Christine Heazlewood

The Tribunal received 44 written submissions from members of the public and organisations and took oral evidence from 9 persons.

When considering the eligibility of individuals for medallic recognition and the eligibility criteria for the relevant medals, the Tribunal carefully examined the basis on which the medals had been created and the circumstances in which they had been awarded. It paid heed to the integrity of the Australian (formerly Imperial) system of honours and awards and the consequential impact any finding or

recommendation might have on that system. In the present context the Tribunal has given particular weight to the principle that recognition of service for the actions of Australians in wartime should, in the ordinary course of events, be provided by Australia.

The Tribunal is of the view that the service of the Australian members of the crews of the Small Ships was analogous to the service of members of the crews of Merchant Navy ships. Recognition of that service on the same basis as that for Merchant Navy personnel is therefore appropriate. Service by British Merchant seamen in allied ships qualifies for medallic recognition. The same approach should be applied to the crews of the Small Ships.

The Tribunal does not recommend that the award of Australian (Imperial) medals be conditional upon forfeiture of any US medals that the crews of the Small Ships may have been awarded. The Tribunal is not satisfied that the US medals are the equivalent of the Imperial medals to which the crews would be entitled if its recommendations are followed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Australian civilian personnel who served in ships operated by the United States Army Small Ships Section between 1942 and 1945 should be recognised as eligible for Australian or Imperial recognition for that service on the same basis as members of the Merchant Navy.

Recommendation 2: There should be no requirement for those personnel to relinquish any US awards that they may have received in respect of their service in the United States Army Small Ships prior to receiving Australian recognition for that service.

Inquiry Into Unresolved Recognition Issues For The Battle Of Long Tan

Executive Summary

1. The Defence Honours and Awards Tribunal was established administratively in July 2008. It inquires into, and in its present role makes recommendations to the Government on, matters referred to it by the Government relating to the granting of honours and awards to serving and former members of the Australian Defence Force.

2. The Tribunal may consider individual claims to medals that have been refused by the relevant awarding authority. It may also consider issues of principle relating to Defence service honours and awards.

3. The Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Support, the Hon Dr Mike Kelly, AM, MP, requested the Tribunal to inquire into unresolved issues for the Battle of Long Tan.

4. This inquiry was undertaken by the following members of the Tribunal:

Professor Dennis Pearce, AO (Chair)
Lieutenant Colonel John Jones, AM (Retd)
Warrant Officer Kevin Woods, CSC, OAM

5. The Tribunal received 46 submissions and took oral evidence from 14 persons.

6. When considering the eligibility of individuals for medallic recognition and the eligibility criteria for the relevant medals, the Tribunal carefully examined the basis on which the medals had been created and the circumstances in which they had been awarded. It paid heed to the integrity of the Australian (formerly Imperial) system of honours and awards and the consequential impact any finding or recommendation might have on that system.

7. The Battle of Long Tan is regarded as Australia's most significant engagement in the Vietnam War. It came soon after the establishment of the 1st Australian Task Force (1ATF) at Nui Dat, in Phuoc Tuy Province, South Vietnam. The Battle, on 18 August 1966, pitted Delta Company, Sixth Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (D Company, 6 RAR) against at least two battalions of Vietnamese regular and provincial soldiers. The determination and gallantry of those involved, decisive command, strong and accurate artillery support from the 1st Field Regiment and the United States (US) Army medium artillery, a well executed ammunition resupply performed by two helicopters of No 9 Squadron Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), and the arrival of a relief force comprising 3 Troop, 1 Armoured Personnel Carrier (APC) Squadron with A Company, 6 RAR aboard resulted in the Battle being decided in the Australians' favour.

8. Many individuals displayed great gallantry in the course of the engagement. The actions of a number of these persons have been recognised by the grant of honours and awards. However, not all persons who took part in the Battle have received recognition and a campaign has been mounted over a number of years to secure greater recognition for those who took part in the Battle.

9. In 2008 the Review of Recognition for the Battle of Long Tan¹ reported recommending the upgrading of the level of awards to some participants in the Battle. However, when the Australian Government announced its response to the review, it announced that 'any other unresolved concerns regarding individual awards for Long Tan would be referred to the independent Defence Honours and Awards Tribunal.'²

10. The Tribunal received recommendations for awards for a number of the participants in the Battle, including for persons who were not members of D Company, 6 RAR.

11. The protocols relating to the grant of honours and awards in place at the time required consideration for an award to be initiated by an authorized officer. Only one of the persons whose position was brought to the Tribunal's attention had been recommended for recognition by the relevant authorized officer in the aftermath of the Battle. Some others had been considered for recognition but no nomination had been made by an authorized signatory.

12. The maintenance of the integrity of the system of honours and awards requires the relevant protocols to be maintained. The Tribunal endorses the statement of the 2008 Review that decisions to recommend new or higher awards should only be made where a clear anomaly or manifest injustice can be established.

13. The Tribunal is being invited by the claimants to reconstruct events that occurred more than 40 years ago

where, in the majority of cases, the only evidence is the recollection of the participants. It does not doubt the sincerity of the assertions by persons as to their recollection of those events but it is at the very least questionable whether the integrity of the Australian Honours system can be maintained if it is based solely on such recollections.

14. Further, it is apparent that the protocols for the award of honours that were in force at the time were complied with. To make an award now, in the absence of a recommendation of the relevant officer, would be to act on the authority of a person who was not authorized to make a recommendation at the time.

15. Nor is the Tribunal persuaded that a clear anomaly or manifest injustice has been established in respect of the various persons whose actions were brought to its attention (with one exception). Accordingly, with that one exception, it does not recommend that any further individual awards be made to participants in the Battle of Long Tan.

16. That exception is the case of Flight Lieutenant Cliff Dohle who was recommended for the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) for his performance at the Battle of Long Tan. That recommendation was supported by all appropriate levels of RAAF command in Vietnam but not accepted in Australia. The Tribunal concludes that Flight Lieutenant Dohle's original recommendation should have been awarded in The End of War list – Vietnam. The contemporary award of the Distinguished Service Medal should now be made posthumously to Flight Lieutenant Dohle.

17. However, the members of the Tribunal readily accept from the available evidence that many acts of gallantry were performed at and around Long Tan on 18 August 1966. Sadly, not all of the men who behaved gallantly on that day have been formally recognised with an award of an individual decoration for gallantry.

18. While the Tribunal is unable to recommend any new or upgraded award to any individual member of D Company, 6RAR, it none the less considers that it would be appropriate to recognise the extraordinary gallantry in action that was demonstrated by D Company, 6 RAR at the Battle of Long Tan by the award of the Unit Citation for Gallantry to the Company.

(1 Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, March 2008. This document will be referred to in this Tribunal report as the 2008 Review).

(2 Joint release Faulkner/Griffin/Kelly - Medals for Long Tan veterans - New Tribunal to examine other issues, 14 August 2008).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Flight Lieutenant Cliff Dohle be awarded the Distinguished Service Medal, the contemporary equivalent award to the Distinguished Flying Cross, the original award for which he was properly recommended in 1966 by all levels of Australian command in Vietnam.

Recommendation 2: No other individual awards be made to participants in the Battle of Long Tan.

Recommendation 3: Delta Company, 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, be awarded the Unit Citation for Gallantry for its performance at the Battle of Long Tan in August 1966.

Reports to Come

Recognition of unattached Australian Entertainers in the Vietnam Conflict

Recognition of Australian Defence Force Service for Special Air Service Regiment Counter Terrorist and Special Recovery duties

Defence Honours & Awards

On the 27th February 2009, we wrote to Mike Kelly MP, who has the responsibility of Honours and Awards as Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Support regarding the issue of recognition for next of kin of those unfortunately killed while serving in the defence force.

There has been many suggestions for a medallion/medal design with appropriate wording of remembrance and solace that would be presented to the next of kin.

This lobbying by the ISPA has been consistent for over 8 years to the numerous veterans affairs ministers and shadow ministers.

The biggest exposure to the ISPA's constant representation came after the 2005 SeaKing helicopter crash in Nias Indonesia.

During the public debate and many media comment it became obvious that a majority of Australians believe some form of recognition should be available to the families of lost servicemen and women. The RSLs as well as ADA however opposed the call citing a devaluation of the honours and awards system. A system that gives Order of Australia, Companion of Australia and Member of Australia Medals to officers and SNCO's for doing their job.

Yet, our pre-eminent ESO the RSL, believes medals/medallions shouldn't be given just for dying doing their job.

Letter from Dr Mike Kelly MP.

Dear Ray

I am writing to provide you with an update concerning the recognition of those Australian Defence Force (ADF) members killed or severely injured on duty.

The Defence Honours and Awards Tribunal is currently conducting inquiries into issues which were identified by the Australian Government in its election policy, *Labor's Plan for Defence*. For the foreseeable future the Tribunal's priority will continue to be current inquiries and long-standing issues.

You may be interested to know that on 18 May 2009 I released the Tribunal's report into the eligibility criteria for the Australian Defence Medal (ADM). The Government agreed to the Tribunal's recommendations. In particular the Government agreed that ADF members who were medically discharged without a compensable illness or injury be assessed by the Department of Defence for the

ADM on a case-by-case basis. This will extend recognition, in the form of the ADM, to ADF members who have become ill or injured while serving but have not received compensation for that illness or injury.

ADF personnel who are killed during military operations qualify for the awards in respect of that operation. These medals are awarded to the next of kin in recognition of the sacrifice of their loved ones.

In addition to this, the *Navy Bereavement Pin* and the *Air Force Bereaved Family Pin* are issued to family members of Navy and Air Force personnel who have died in service. The Army presents a national flag in a jarrah case to families of Army personnel who die while on operational service.

The Australian War Memorial also maintains the Roll of Honour commemorating those who are killed in warlike operations and the Remembrance Book, which commemorates those who have died on non-warlike and peacekeeping operations.

You may be interested to know that I recently asked Defence to examine the possibility of recognition for ADF personnel who are killed in action, noting the level of community interest in this matter. I appreciate the careful thought you have given to this matter a copy of your letter has been passed to Defence for consideration.

Thank you for your interest in this matter.

Yours sincerely
Mike Kelly

This is the standard reply. But it's the government who send the servicemen and women overseas. It's the government who commits our ADF to serve in war, peacekeeping or humanitarian aid.

Dr Kelly as usual uses the ADM as a reason that the next-of-kin not need special acknowledgement. Is Dr Kelly aware that the Australian Sports Medal & Centenary Medal are before the ADM in order of precedence? What an insult to say to the widow/widower/mother/father that the ADM is good enough.

The other point to note is that there is no consistency across the 3 services. Navy and Air Force give a pin which is able to be worn while the Army gives a flag.

I have no idea why Dr Kelly raised the AWM since the focus is war and conflict. I bet Dr Kelly isn't aware of the huge inconsistencies relating to the inclusion of non war fatalities on the Wall of Remembrance within the AWM.

It is interesting to note the examination of recognition of those killed in action. Isn't the ADM good enough for them? How would a KIA medal be applied in the Jake Kovco circumstance?

Asking defence to examine this is not getting an independent examination. How can families present a submission? How can organisations provide a detailed argument for or against?

Each time Mike Kelly announces a DH&AT review he finishes each media release with the following paragraph:

"Many people have written to me concerning recognition for SASR duties and I would encourage them to now take advantage of this opportunity to make a submission to the Tribunal," Dr Kelly said.

"Many people have written to me concerning eligibility issues associated with recognition for service for Australian Military personnel who served with 4th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment in Malaysia in 1966 to 1967, and I would encourage them to now take advantage of this opportunity to make a submission," Dr Kelly said.

"Many people have written to me concerning eligibility issues associated with recognition for service with the US Army Small Ships Section during World War II and I would encourage them to now take advantage of this opportunity to make a submission," Dr Kelly said.

"Many people have raised issues concerning recognition for ADF service in Somalia and I would encourage them to now take advantage of this opportunity to make a submission," Dr Kelly said.

"Many people have raised the issue of recognition for ADF service in PNG after 1975 with the Government, and I would encourage them to now take advantage of this opportunity to make a submission," Dr Kelly said.

"Many people have raised with the Government the issue of separate additional recognition for Australian Defence Force peacekeeping service and I would encourage them to now take advantage of this opportunity to make a submission," Dr Kelly said.

So here's the deal. If everyone who believes that the next of kin of a person killed whilst serving and performing their duties (not off duty) should be special recognition then you must let Mike Kelly know.

Just a couple of ESO'S and individuals writing in will be ignored. But if enough people write then surely he must act. Be sure to send a copy to the ISPA.

It is up to everyone to write to the government and ask for a DH&AT review into appropriate recognition for the next of kin of those killed whilst on duty.

Veterans Affairs: Pensions

Senator MARK BISHOP (Western Australia) (7.09pm)—In the adjournment debate tonight I wish to address a matter of substance, a matter I have raised on previous occasions—namely, the defence widows pension.

It is also known, incorrectly these days, as the war widows pension. The difference in terminology is important for one particular reason. Through the work of the Senate committee on foreign affairs and defence in 2004, the distinction between widows was identified.

Widows bereaved by a death on operational service overseas were treated differently to widows bereaved in Australia in peacetime service. The committee's view simply was that we should not distinguish between causes of death. Grief, of course, does not distinguish between widows. Also, it is very hard to distinguish between the death of someone on the battlefield and the death of someone who dies some time later from wounds incurred there, though the longer the period between death and injury the lower the probability of any connection.

That is a very important principle and one I trust is never lost. It is important because it also applies to other areas of military compensation. The same distinction, conceivably, should also be made for disability compensation, as it is overseas in all allied jurisdictions.

That is, an injury incurred on overseas service should be treated the same as if it occurred in peacetime.

One of the great inequities in military compensation is there is a 50 per cent premium for compensation for injuries incurred overseas. Yet for serious injuries—that is, a permanent impairment over 80 points—the compensation is the same. Quite frankly, the sooner we get rid of this discrimination of benefits based on service the better. I know from the Senate committee hearings in 2004 that this is also the view of most ex-service organisations.

I am prompted to raise the widows pension matter again, sadly, for much the same reason as I did some years ago. On Sunday, 27 August the *Sunday Telegraph* led with a shock-and-horror headline across its front page. The headline decried the circumstances of a recently widowed lady whose husband had been killed in Afghanistan—as we all know, a very sad set of circumstances, one in which we all sympathise and respect the emotions of loved ones. Nevertheless, the journalist concerned took flight with what can only be described as an ill-informed article. There was little mention of the facts. That waited for the next Sunday edition, and it was then still incomplete. The shock of it all was described as ill-treatment of the bereaved and the poverty of her financial circumstances. The facts were not allowed to get into that mostly alarming story.

Overall, the article created an immediate impression of an uncaring government and a widowed mother in great personal distress. It was quite a pathetic story in two senses—first, because many others in the media grabbed the story without asking questions, proceeding down the same crude, sensationalist road without interest in the facts or the sensitivities of the widow concerned or her family. The facts, of course, are something else. The second reason is that the widow, still grieving the loss of her husband, did not deserve to be made the subject of so much attention. I have no doubt here the intervention was well motivated, not to complain but to point out just how messy the current system is—and she was right to do so. Governments, I am afraid, are on a hiding to nothing in these matters, simply because the factual information is very personal and very private. That privacy must be respected—a value, it must be said, many in the media choose not to share.

Let me again set out the facts about a defence widow's entitlements under the new Military Rehabilitation and

Compensation Act. First, there is a lump sum paid immediately. That lump sum is indexed annually and currently set at \$122,742. It is tax free, but after the age of 40 it reduces. That is paid immediately upon death by the Department of Veterans' Affairs. I understand the salary of the deceased paid at the time of death continues for four pays. It continues at the rate of pay for the deployment but excluding the deployment allowance. Then the bereaved has a choice of a widows pension or a lump sum.

The current rate of war widows pension under the Veterans' Entitlements Act is \$339.50 per week. The lump sum is an actuarial equivalent of the pension depending on the age of the bereaved and reducing after age 30. For example, for a 30-year-old widow that would be a lump sum of \$518,717. The choice is the pension on the one hand or the lump sum on the other.

To help in making that decision and other financial decisions, \$1,472 is available for advice of the kind sought by the particular person. In the case of dependants, there is a lump sum of \$73,645 each, plus a pension of \$81 per week. On top of that, there is educational support for each dependant of \$223 per year for primary school. That payment rises to a maximum of \$371.40 a fortnight per student child over 18 in homeless circumstances. Next there is a funeral benefit of almost \$10,000, and of course a gold card for free medical care for life.

But that is not the end of it. Like all superannuated employee dependants, there is a reversionary pension of approximately two-thirds of the expected member's pension. There is also the return of all personal contributions plus interest. I have no idea what that might be and we are not entitled to know. Suffice it to say that it would be a reasonable sum. It could be worth several hundred thousand dollars depending on length of service.

That is a standard death benefit. Then there is life insurance which is available to everyone deployed. The sensible take it, the gamblers do not—they strangely think they might be bulletproof.

If the inference of the media is that this is miserly, then I do not think anyone is in a position to pontificate.

I certainly do not know what appropriate compensation is for the loss of a loved one is or how it might be calculated. The economic parameter might be easily calculated, but

the future of the widow cannot be. The final point is that we do not know and cannot know all of the circumstances. Yet not knowing that and not being able to know that does not prevent the sensationalism of the media. What I do know is that this package is no doubt the most generous in the world. It is certainly way beyond any workers compensation scheme.

I fear that the widow in this case may have been genuinely seeking to make input to a current review which is underway. I suspect she may have been very emotional, as one would expect, and may have received poor advice. She may not have understood the complexity of benefits and one readily understands how that would occur at such a difficult time. Yet this difficult set of circumstances did not at all faze the journalist who swooped on a gory story at her expense.

If there is a remark to be made here, it is that the system is unnecessarily complex. Grieving widows with children to care for inevitably find these matters difficult.

Organisations like Legacy do a wonderful job of helping them, but the sums of money are large and whole lifetimes have to be planned in a short time frame. Children's needs have to be predicted. Houses have to be purchased. New arrangements have to be made. In this case there is a custody matter to be settled and a new birth is imminent.

Again in these circumstances we see the risks of the relationship between Defence and the Department of Veterans' Affairs, both administratively and in policy responsibility. The welfare of so many ADF personnel seems to be mashed across this departmental chasm once they transit from service. The minister has sought a review. However, it is possible in my mind that across this divide the widow's care may well have been mismanaged. One day we might get it right. We seriously need to rearrange the functionality assisting people leaving the services, providing a seamless transition which is not divided between institutional stovepipes.

Mr President, I hesitated to raise this issue, but when generous benefits and care for the bereaved are misrepresented, as they have been, something needs to be said. I simply hope that in the future the media might take a little more care in getting the facts correct.

galloping grapes

horse riding, leasing and agistment

Tel: 02 9888 9301 Megan 0418 660 020

5 Whiteside St, North Ryde NSW 2113

www.gallopinggrapes.com.au • megan@gallopinggrapes.com.au

THE UNIQUE NATURE OF AUSTRALIAN EX-SERVICE ORGANISATIONS

Kel Ryan DFWA FORUM 23 OCTOBER 2009

In 2006 I presented the findings of an initial study into why so many veteran and ex-service organisations have been established in Australia.

This study involved detailed interviews and discussions with 15 Queensland ESO's and established that while the RSL was recognised as the leading ESO for the first 60 plus years of its existence that situation changed slowly in the period after the Vietnam War and surely in the 1980's. I found that:

The absence of clear, dynamic and strategic leadership within organisations such as the RSL enabled and indeed encouraged, by default, the establishment of ESO's more in tune with the generation of veterans and ex-service personnel in the post Vietnam period.

The previously accepted dominant position of the traditional veteran organisations was being lost to these newer, more focussed organisations.

The previously singular mindset of the RSL in focussing on the needs of 'returned men' or veterans had not given way to addressing the issues relevant to the broader veteran and ex-service community.

It was agreed that the RSL cannot go back to the past and seek to regain its previous central role in Australia society, and

The RSL, if it is to survive the looming loss of over half its membership with the passing of the WW2 generation will need to define a new role for itself in the Australia of the 21st Century. This it is still yet to do!

But for a moment let us go back to the beginning!

In October 1918, which was just two years after the formation of the RSL, the then Minister for Defence, Senator Pearce,

“— issued an order notifying all departments that the League was to be recognised as the official representative body of returned soldiers.”

This grant of official status reflected the Leagues standing within the returned soldier movement but with it went important political implications. The League even in those far off days was seen by many members as being too close to the government of the day.

Such was the power of this formal government approval that G. L. Kristianson in his 'The Politics of Patriotism' states that the initial period of the Leagues history ended in 1919 with “— the organisation holding an undisputed position as Australia's major ex-service body”

Here I will mention two essential points:

Firstly I do not propose to focus solely on the RSL in isolation or indeed on other ESO's for that matter but rather to seek to understand those behaviours that characterise the ESO community as it goes about its work and so makes them unique. The RSL by virtue of its membership

numbers, its geographic spread and its 93 years existence naturally warrants it particular mention however, and

Secondly until the early 1980's the ex-service organisations focussed on veterans or 'returned men' to the exclusion of those who had not serve overseas. This divide between those who had served on war or operational service and those who had not has been a thorn in the side of the veteran and ex-service community since the 'had nots' were excluded from joining the RSL back in 1916.

It is interesting to note that the National Servicemen's Association, which claims to be the second largest ex-service organisation in the nation, was established in part because of this fight for recognition. The national servicemen, who had served in Malaysia, Papua New Guinea and Australia, although giving up two years of their lives, were not eligible for the repatriation benefits available to those who served in Vietnam and Borneo on active service.

What I am seeking to do is to establish what is unique about ex-service organisations in Australian not that which divides them. Unfortunately though, it is the differences endemic within and between each ESO that dissuades them from working together at critical times.

The 2009 DVA Directory of Ex-Service Organisations lists 54 “organisations of a nationally based nature with either a formal National/State Branch structure or those with branches at a state level —“54! ESO's'

Further the “Department [now] does not have any single specific definition as to what constitutes an Ex-Service Organisation —“but rather cites several circumstances in which the term is noteworthy. These include for mailing purposes, eligibility for BEST [Building Excellence in Support and Training] Grants and membership of committees such as the PMAC and others.

The Department however does recognise that a 'bona fide' ESO is an organisation whose membership consists primarily of veterans, dependents and/or past and present members of the ADF. So the descriptor of an ESO is now much broader than we have seen in the past.

So why and when did this dramatic change in the makeup of the ESO community occur? The change also altered the tenor of the whole ESO community as well.

While allegedly sharing a common interest, the RSL, from its beginnings had shown scant enthusiasm to join with any of the other organisations seeking to represent the interests of the veteran [and more recently the ex-service] community. This was from the understandable desire not to be held hostage to the views of other organisations which would invariably outvote the RSL despite its numerical strength.

However if the need arose the RSL did work with other organisations as in 1931 when the Scullin Government sought to introduce 'War Pension Cuts' which would have reduced the pensions paid to veterans, widows, mothers of those killed on war service and orphans.

The National President spoke on behalf of a number of veteran organisations and in the end reached an acceptable compromise on the issue. He was adamant however that he and he alone would address the meeting as again, he did not want the RSL to be seen as beholden to or speaking for other organisations.

A fine yet independent line for the RSL! This attitude continues to cause anxiety among the ESO community to this day.

In those early, heady days the League achieved much by dint of the ability of its leadership, its membership numbers, its successes, and its well developed political relationships. The RSL was seen at that time as the sole voice of Australia's veteran community. Its unique position within both the political and community life of Australia in the inter war period enabled it to foster a unique character, a distinctive culture that remains characteristic of the organisation to this day. The RSL along with the WWG and the TPI Federation are seen as the traditional organisations within the veteran and ex-service community.

My proposal to you today is that the history of the ESO's in Australia can be identified in two distinct, unique periods.

The first is from 1916 to 1972 during which period there was universal support for the veteran community because of the flow on effect of WW1 and WW2 and the subsequent overwhelming number of veterans in the community. Their role was to tend to the needs of the veteran community particularly in the area of pensions, welfare and advocacy.

The second period is from 1972 to the present time. The period after the Vietnam War saw the election of the Whitlam Government which had been a vocal opponent of the war and conscription while the anti-war movement itself still had resonance within the community and the general unpopularity of the anything military saw a decline in support for the veteran community particularly those of the Vietnam conflict.

In 1983 with its membership declining the RSL approved a plebiscite resolution to open membership to all who had served in the Australian Defence Force for six months or more. This broadening of the membership criteria was reluctantly accepted, as long held beliefs were difficult to change.

Critically while broadening the criteria for membership the RSL failed to change its focus from the issues and concerns of the veterans of the two World Wars. Its annual congresses at both National and state level continued to address motions and issues relevant to these veterans.

Its Aims and Ideals which were, and remain today, the basis of its culture were not reviewed nor were they amended to take account of the concerns and issues of a newer generation of veteran let alone those Australian's who served in the Defence Force but did not go overseas. It was these very ex-servicemen that the RSL sought to gain as members but available figures for the years after the change indicate a continuing decline in the membership

In his Report to the 1983 National Congress, the National President Sir William Keys emphasised the League's expectations in widening the membership when he said that it is "the new guidelines on which the future of the

League could be based" Use of the word 'could' may indicate that even the then National President had some misgivings as to the possible success of the historic decision taken earlier that year.

It gives a strong sense of the possible rather than the probable. Membership figures for that period would not have given the National Executive confidence that their decision was to provide the boon in membership they may have expected. Expectations were not met! The membership figures show that in:

1983 – 270,009

1986 - 261,396

2008 – 189,350 [approximately 25,000 of these members are Affiliate Members of the Victorian Branch]

History tells us that with the formation of the first of the Vietnam Veteran ESO's the words of Sir William Keys fell on deaf ears.

The character of the Australian Ex-Service community was changing dramatically. It follows that the makeup and public persona of these newer ESO's varied from past experience as they sought to project themselves and their issues to government and the bureaucracy.

Mission creep is the movement of an organisation from having a clear and respected position to one that is broader, more blurred and distorted because of the breath of the new course it has set itself. The RSL set itself a new course when it changed the membership criteria but did not prepare for that very change.

A 1999 study found that members will leave one organisation and start up a new one in which they are free to implement their ideas. This study refers to five trigger events which prompt the formation of breakaway organisations. This is the introduction of conflicting ideas, their legitimisation, alarm, polarisation of views and finally justification.

Of particular note here is the mention of the trigger that prompts the breakaway or establishment of another group. It is suggested that the 'trigger' is the introduction, by those who would eventually breakaway, of conflicting ideas that are at odds with the status quo.

It can be rightfully argued that the culture of the RSL, the pre-eminent, traditional veteran organisation was not able to cope with the aspirations and demands of a new generation of veteran and the recently eligible ex-serviceman and women without overseas service.

This change markedly altered the political and bureaucratic environment in which the ex-service community operated.

From being uniquely focussed on welfare, pensions and advocacy ESO's are now frequently called upon to broaden their perspective and address a broad spectrum of local, state and national issues. This is proving to be a drain on volunteers and intellectual capacity for individual ESO's that have not developed the flexibility and the resources to deal with the changed, dynamic environment of today. The RSL is one of these!

The nature and role of the 'traditional veteran organisations' has changed and continues to change. This is seen to be both a blessing as it provides a choice of where to go for

support but it is also a curse. A curse as it divides the voice of the veteran and ex-service community at a time when it should be united in pressing issues to government.

The question now for the veteran and ex-service community is where does it go now? Are the increased number of ESO's an advantage or disadvantage? Have the older organisations such as the RSL, the WWG and the TPI Federation lost their relevance?

Have the ESO's lost their uniqueness as representatives of the veteran and ex-service community?

Research suggests that old organisations are less likely to die than are young ones. Further it proposes that "what little evidence there is suggests that performance of the older organisations does not improve correspondingly with age". What of organisations then that do continue but do not perform to expectations? These are said to be 'permanently failing!'

Here the urge is often that such organisations are maintained because of the benefits and position the leadership, the members or individuals gain from them. In other words self interest becomes the imperative rather than the life and continuity of a healthy organisation. Is this the position the RSL is in at present? I would suggest 'Yes!' It has been said that only a war widow can represent a war widow! Is this correct?

I suggest that it is time that the RSL and the other ESO's redefined their relevance to the constituency they profess to represent. Failure on their part to date has seen the Government take the initiative in establishing the PMAC and various subsidiary forums which are being seen in some quarters as an attempt to 'corral' the voices; the ideas of the ESO's. All this was done with the quiet acquiescence of the ESO's or left them with no other option than to be inside the tent.

The paradox the veteran and ex-service community have in Australia at present is that there is the danger of simply maintaining the existing organisations rather than seeking to improve overall performance. The dilemma becomes one of self-interest versus the urgency and the necessity of providing dynamic, purposeful leadership for all in the veteran and ex-service community.

The birth of the many ESO's in recent years has surely put on notice the larger, traditional organisations. The newer ESO's tend to be more focussed i.e. the VVAA and the VVFA gained their initial momentum from addressing the issues of the Vietnam veterans at a time when the RSL was reluctant to do so. One could certainly question the need for two organisations representing the Vietnam veterans however.

The PVA is now focussed on the issues that affect the families of those who have served or who are currently serving in the defence forces, a task that has not been seen to warrant organised consideration in the past.

The RAR Association, dissatisfied with the response of the RSL to issues of concern to its members is now organising nationally. This association has a potential membership of 80,000 serving and former serving infantry soldiers.

Research indicates that the larger and older the organisation, the slower and more bureaucratic becomes the response to issues that arise. There are snowballing factors which inhibit older organisations from responding with the changing times. Among these reasons is that the larger the organisation the less benefit will pass through to the group.

Next the larger the group the smaller the benefit will be to the individual members and finally the larger the membership the greater the costs involved. Put another more simplistic way the larger the organisation the more likely it is to fall short of providing optimal benefit to the membership.

Generally speaking however it will be of some comfort to those in leadership positions in the traditional veteran and ex-service organisations that few organisations in stable societies such as Australia will disband. Rather they gather around them special-interest entities and then conspire to continue existence.

It is appropriate to ask then what benefits are gained from smaller; newer organisations as opposed to the much larger older well established ones. The term 'free rider' is an apt description here as it refers to the enthusiasm of the individual members to participate in collective action on behalf of the organisation. The conclusion is that the smaller the organisation the more likely it is that members will participate and work together. The larger the organisation then there will more likely be more members who go along for the ride.

The veteran and ex-service community has to face its future free of individuals and ESO's that are free riders; that seek to pursue self or a narrow interests and that simply distract from the substantive issues of the time. The multiplicity of ESO's has done little for the cohesion of the overall veteran and ex-service community. Rather it has given comfort to those who would dispute the rightful claims of those who have served.

Much of the responsibility for this present situation can rightfully and forcefully be placed at the feet of the traditional veteran organisations. They simply have failed to adjust and to refocus to the needs of the rapidly changing demands of a newer generation of veteran and ex-service person.

This will involve taking on a judicious leadership stance among the veteran and ex-service organisations not a stance of dominance. This role should be one of accepting the place of the newer ESO's and working with them on behalf of the broader veteran and ex-service community and not against them. The RSL will have to adopt a patient attitude to the future!

It is vital that the ESO community work together for the benefit of the broad veteran and ex-service community.

If the RSL is patient, plans well and works in partnership with the other ESO's it may be surprised as to what the future holds for us all. It should not hope to gain its previous position.

Being confrontational will never build cohesion. It will be to the better of all in the ESO community!

Kel Ryann keljan1@bigpond.com

22 Oct '09

Consultative Forums

The Veterans' Affairs Consultative Framework comprises national and State/Territory forums.

National forums include the peak ESO Round Table which is supported by four other forums focusing on policy, program matters and the operations of the Department. Special interest or industry-specific groups may be formed to complement the Framework.

Each State and Territory will also have a forum to discuss local issues.

PMAC Meeting 2-3 July 2009

Key agenda items at this meeting were:

1. the Review of Military Compensation Arrangements,
2. implementation of recommendations of the Dunt Suicide Study,
3. reconsideration of the Clarke Review recommendations,
4. the Health Review of the Department of Defence, and
5. the Nature of Service Review.

In his address to the meeting, the Minister referred to recent changes to Defence ministerial arrangements, seeing these as positive for relationship building between the two portfolios. The Minister also outlined present challenges and a number of priority matters for the Council to consider during the remainder of this year. The most important of these is the Review of Military Compensation Arrangements.

The next stage of this Review involves consultation with members and former members of the Australian Defence Force, ex-service organisations, key agencies and other stakeholders. Following a suggestion at the meeting for an increased involvement of PMAC in this review, PMAC members have been invited to attend public consultation meetings in their home State. The importance of involving partners and families of Defence Personnel in the consultation process was also stressed at the meeting and this idea will be discussed with the Department of Defence. Two PMAC members will also have the opportunity to attend monthly meetings of the Review's Steering Committee.

Following lengthy consideration of the recommendations of the Clarke Review, PMAC's views on a number of recommendations not acted on by the previous government will be formally conveyed to the Minister. Other recommendations, to be informed by the Department of Defence's BRIG David Webster's Nature of Service Review, were put aside for later discussion. At this meeting, BRIG Webster provided an informative and stimulating brief on the Nature of Service Review to assist in clarifying the central debate about the nature of service, particularly around definitions of 'hazardous' and 'war like'.

MAJGEN Paul Alexander, Commander Joint Health, Department of Defence was not able to attend the meeting to deliver his presentation on the Defence Health Review. He was represented by BRIG Tony Gill from the Department of Defence, whose briefing covered the Joint Health Command Reform Initiatives, the Separation Health

Examination Project and the Integrated People Support Strategy. PMAC members raised with BRIG Gill the issues for reservists returning from deployments to civilian life and the use of advocates to support serving members.

In ongoing discussions on mental health issues, Professor Ken Donald, Chair of the Repatriation Medical Authority, attended to talk about the process of developing Statements of Principles (SoPs), particularly mental health SoPs and the constraints on the SoP system.

Over several meetings the Council has given some attention to concerns about the apparent shortcomings of the Defence PM Keys record system, the input of data to this system and maintenance of the information. Relevant personnel from the Department of Defence will be invited to attend the October PMAC meeting to brief the members on PM Keys and discuss their concerns.

As at each meeting, the Council took time to consider a number of submissions and matters received from the ex-service community. The Council provides suggestions to the PMAC Secretariat for responses or makes recommendations for what follow-up action is required.

Information about the type of matters considered by the Council is on the website <http://minister.dva.gov.au/PMAC/index.htm>.

If you wish to raise a matter for the Council's consideration, please use the submission template.

The next PMAC meeting is scheduled for 15 and 16 October 2009.

Operational Working Party

Terms of Reference

The Operational Working Party (OWP) will:

- enhance the ex-service community's understanding of DVA's service delivery performance through information sharing and improved communication between DVA and the ex-service community;
- be a forum for ex-service organisations to discuss concerns arising from operational issues; and
- identify and provide recommendations for improvements in operational policy to promote quality and accountability in service delivery.

For this forum there is a need for broad representation that utilises the knowledge and expertise of individuals including those who are across day-to-day issues and with specific experience such as advocates or pension officers.

The forum maintains the right to invite representatives of other organisations or individuals as determined by the areas of focus or specific agenda items.

Meeting Schedule

The Operational Working Party meets face-to-face two or three times per year and if required, holds additional meetings via video or telephone conference. The initial meeting was held on 10 November 2009.

Meeting Summaries

A summary of each forum meeting is available to download.

Contact

To contact the Secretariat of the Operational Working Party:

Ph: 02 6225 4455

Email: OperationalWorkingParty@dva.gov.au

National Health, Aged and Community Care Forum**Terms of Reference**

The forum will:

- be a link between ESOs, providers and DVA in the dissemination of information on health, aged and community care issues;
- provide information on the current and future aged care needs of veterans and war widow/ers and other members of the ex-service and defence community including carers;
- be a conduit for developing and proposing better practice residential and community care arrangements for the ex-service community;
- ensure that non ESO aged care service providers are aware of the special commemorative and cultural needs of their ex-service community clients;
- influence future policy directions regarding ageing for the ex-service community;
- monitor developments in the aged care industry and the aged care needs of the ex-service community, including access to residential care; and
- consider how the Department better supports people at home with community support.

Departmental involvement in this forum will be available as appropriate but because of its remit should include the Department of Veterans' Affairs Principal Medical Adviser.

The forum has the flexibility to invite representatives from other organisations or individuals as determined by the areas of focus or specific agenda items. As the consultation in this field has traditionally focussed on issues of ageing and related policy, it involves service providers.

Meeting Schedule

The National Health, Aged and Community Care Forum meets face-to-face two or three times per year and if required, holds additional meetings via video or telephone conference. The initial meeting was held on 18 November 2009.

Meeting Summaries

A summary of each forum meeting is available to download.

Contact

To contact the Secretariat of the Health, Aged and Community Care Forum:

Ph: 02 6289 6541

Email: Aged.CommunityCareForum@dva.gov.au

Current and Former Members of the ADF – Emerging Issues Forum

Terms of Reference

The forum will:

- provide a mechanism for regular consultation and discussion about emerging issues affecting younger members and their families;
- assist in identifying priority issues that require consideration;
- consider how the Department engages with and provides services to younger members; and
- provide a mechanism to disseminate information about Departmental initiatives and other issues.

Departmental representation will be available as appropriate.

The forum has the flexibility to invite additional participants relevant to the areas of focus or specific agenda items (including service specific and non-ESO aligned). For example, membership of this forum could include a representative of the Australian Federal Police (International Deployment Group) or the United Nations Police Association.

Meeting Schedule

The Current and Former Members of the ADF – Emerging Issues Forum meets face-to-face two or three times per year and if required, holds additional meetings via video or telephone conference. The initial meeting was held on 13 November 2009.

Meeting Summaries

A summary of each forum meeting is available to download.

Contact

To contact the Secretariat of the Current and Former Members of the ADF – Emerging Issues Forum:

Ph: 02 6225 4455

Email: EmergingIssuesForum@dva.gov.au

National Mental Health Forum**Terms of Reference**

The forum will:

enable broad consultation on mental health issues;

- promote a network between ex-service organisations, health providers, Department of Defence and Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) that support the adoption of recovery and wellbeing orientations to mental health issues. This should focus on prevention, early intervention, diagnosis, assessment, rehabilitation, treatment and relapse management;
- contribute and be responsible for raising awareness of mental health issues although the forum will not develop educative processes directly; and
- provide a sounding board for advice on national mental health programs, services and initiatives, particularly as they affect the veteran community.

Departmental and expert representation will be available as appropriate. Additionally, the National Manager of the VVCS attends all meetings as an ex-officio member.

The forum has the flexibility to invite additional participants relevant to the areas of focus or specific agenda items. For example, membership of this forum could be

supplemented by relevant clinical experts or a representative of the Australian Federal Police (International Deployment Group) or the United Nations Police Association.

Meeting Schedule

The National Mental Health Forum meets face-to-face two or three times per year and if required, holds additional meetings via video or telephone conference. The initial

meeting was held on 5 November 2009.

Meeting Summaries

A summary of each forum meeting is available to download.

Contact

To contact the Secretariat of the Mental Health Forum:

Ph: 02 6289 6541

Email: MentalHealthForum@dva.gov.au

Questions on Notice

Ex-Service Organisations

(Question No. 695)

Mrs Markus asked the Minister for Defence, Personnel, Materiel and Science, in writing, on 12 May 2009:

(1) Are ex-service organisations entitled to access Australian Defence Force (ADF) bases to assist personnel during the transition from defence to civilian life.

(2) What information, or referral to ex-service organisations, is made available to ADF personnel upon discharge.

(3) Who determines whether ADF personnel can speak with ex-service organisations on ADF bases.

Mr Combet—The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(1) and (3) Yes, however, ex-service organisations do not have an automatic entitlement to enter ADF bases. Organisations may be sponsored by units or individuals to come onto a base to conduct one-off briefings or provide services. The use of ADF facilities for ex-service organisations to provide advice or advocacy services on an ad-hoc basis is a matter for individual Unit Commanders under the sponsorship arrangements.

(2) Separating (discharging) ADF personnel are provided with information about ex-service organisations, including how to access them, during separation interviews. If the ADF member requests advocacy assistance with compensation claims, they are referred to the regional Training and Information Program chairperson, who is responsible for connecting the ADF member to an appropriately trained ex-service organisation representative.

Information is also disseminated during ADF Transition Seminars that include presentations by ex-service organisations and Training and Information Program representatives, as well as ex-service organisation information stands.

ADF personnel may refer themselves to ex-service organisations and can obtain information about them through the promotional material contained in the Service newspapers.

Australian Defence Force: Entitlements

(Question No. 878)

Mr Robert asked the Minister representing the Minister for Defence, in writing, on 11 August 2009:

If a member of the Australian Defence Force (full-time or reserve) is killed on active service, does his/her estate receive the total sum of allowances, including full pay, for the entire tour of duty (which is the case if a member is wounded in action); if not, what is received by the estate.

Mr Combet—The Minister for Defence has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

No. For the purpose of salary and allowances, the estate of a member who is killed on active service will receive the salary and allowances calculated to midnight on the day the member dies. This will include, where appropriate, pay in lieu of long service leave and recreation leave calculated to the day the member dies. Separate to salary and allowances, superannuation benefits will also be paid and dependants of a deceased member are entitled to compensation under the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004*.

Wayne Hammelswang

Painting Contractor

Specialising in all aspects of painting and decorating

Mobile: 0400 499 676

Kelso Qld 4815



Military Superannuation Indexation

The Matthews Report as most would know was a review that included military superannuates and the indexation applied to the superannuation scheme.

The recommendations were reproduced in the Spring 09 edition of Duty Served. In response, the ISPA wrote to Alan Griffin the Veterans Affairs Minister, Louise Markus the Shadow Minister for Veterans Affairs and Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Support Dr Mike Kelly. The letter sent was:

Dear Ministers and Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Support,

I write to you on behalf of the DFRDB/MSBS invalidity pensioners who are being neglected by the government after the recommendations of the Matthews report into the indexation of military superannuation were recently released after 9 months of being withheld.

The Matthews recommendations are:

Recommendation 1: That pensions from the Australian Government civilian and military superannuation schemes continue to be indexed against the effects of inflationary price increases.

Recommendation 2: That the same indexation methodology continue to apply to all civilian and military pensions.

Recommendation 3: That pensions from the Australian Government civilian and military superannuation schemes continue to be indexed by the CPI as the most suitable index to protect pensions against inflationary price increases available at this time.

Recommendation 4: That, if a robust index which reflects the price inflation experience of superannuants better than the CPI becomes available in the future, the Australian Government should consider its use for indexing Australian Government civilian and military superannuation pensions.

In light of the above, there has been a bill passed in parliament called *The Veterans' Affairs and Other Legislation Amendment (Pension Reform) Bill 2009*.

As you are aware one of the amendments is the introduction of the *Pensioner and Beneficiary Living Cost Index (PBLCI)*.

An email that I sent to you (Alan Griffin) dated 25 August referred to a media article about the PBLCI applying to some veterans and whether it would apply to Comsuper, SRCA and MRCA pensions.

You promptly telephoned me and stated it would not apply to SRCA or Comsuper pensions. We also discussed the recommendations of the Matthews review to remain CPI.

Now what makes me angry in all this is that the government is saying that one group of veteran pensioners are doing it tough with the indexation of their pension while another group is appropriately indexed.

For years we have been told that the CPI is an adequate indexation for the cost of living experienced by ex-military

pensioners. However, after years of fighting by the TPI association, the Special Rate pension was re-indexed to better reflect the cost of living rises.

But all along the Comsuper pensioners were and still are being told the CPI is a fair and appropriate indexing application.

Why are the disabled pensioners under the VEA worse off than the disabled DFRDB/MSBS invalided pensioners?

Do you think that quadriplegic, paraplegic, blinded, burnt, amputees, acquired brain injury disabled DFRDB/MSBS on Class A pensions are better off than their VEA counterparts?

Let's not forget that those severely injured in peacetime service don't enjoy the benefits of a gold card or many of the other concessions of veterans.

During the Pension Reform Bill 2009 debate, senators and members in both houses from both sides of governments stated in part that the PBLCI more closely reflects the cost of living increases for pensioners.

It would be a safe bet to say that the cost of living increases don't occur to one particular group of pensioners or indeed just to the pensioner community.

Even yourself Alan admitted that the CPI is an inadequate indexation for the cost of living increases with your debate speech in part stating:

"A significant improvement will be made to the indexation of income support pensions, benchmarking them against a more realistic indicator of changes to the cost of living for pensioners. The pension reform package introduces a new pensioner and beneficiary living cost index that actually measures the cost of living for pensioners."

The new pensioner and beneficiary living cost index recognises that the cost of living for pensioners and beneficiaries may increase faster than the cost of living for the general community, as measured by the consumer price index."

Aren't peacetime service people on 75% of discharged pay rate for life under DFRDB/MSBS pensioners?

Dr Kelly in his 2007 pre-election campaign media release stated in part:

Mike Kelly pointed out that the current Commonwealth superannuation regime indexes payments using the Consumer Price Index, which means retirees were seeing their incomes fall compared to others in the community.

Mike Kelly said changes were necessary to ensure that retirees are given a fair go.

"Currently, people who retired on a Commonwealth superannuation pension of \$20,000 today would be \$7,000 worse off in 20 years time if their pension continued to be indexed by the CPI."

"The Commonwealth uses a wage-based index for the Age

Pension. If I'm elected to parliament, I'll argue strongly for Commonwealth superannuants to be given the same deal. It's only fair."

"I have already discussed these issues with Opposition Shadow Minister for Superannuation, Senator Nick Sherry."

"If I'm elected as Member for Eden-Monaro, I will never stop campaigning on this issue until it is adopted and implemented for every Commonwealth superannuant in Eden-Monaro, and all of Australia."

Mike Kelly said changes to indexation were a matter of fairness.

So in light of the admission by government senators and members that the CPI is not a proper indexing measure for the cost of living for pensioners and the election promise if elected of the member for Eden-Monaro and recommendation 4 of the Matthews report into superannuation indexation:

Will the government now amend the legislation so that the military superannuation pension includes the PBLCI which the Minister for Veterans Affairs admits **actually measures the cost of living for pensioners.**"

Ray Brown

The response from Mike Kelly was that he and 3 other MP's have written to Lindsay Tanner expressing their concern that the military superannuation indexation will remain the CPI and they believe it should be changed.

Mike Kelly's response was:

Dear 

Thank you for your letter, dated 9th September 2009, on behalf of DFRDB/MSBS invalidity pensioners, concerning the recommendations of the Matthews report into Indexation of Superannuation Pensions.

I have carefully noted your letter, particularly your request that the government adopt the new Pensioner and Beneficiary Living Cost Index (PBLCI).

On the 14th September 2009, Senator Kate Lundy, Senator for the ACT, Bob McMullen MP, Member for Fraser and Annette Ellis MP, Member for Canberra and myself wrote to The Hon Lindsay Tanner MP, Minister for Finance and Deregulation, seeking his support for the adoption of the PBLCI, or the CPI, whichever is the greater, as the indexation measure(s) applied to Australian Government civilian and military pensions. A copy of our letter is attached.

We requested the change as an interim measure to allow further consultation with superannuation recipients, and their representative groups.

Once again, thank you for contacting me on this issue.

Yours sincerely

Mike Kelly AM MP
Member for Eden-Monaro
28 September 2009

The following is Lindsay Tanner MP's response:

Dear Mr Brown

Thank you for your letter of 9 September 2009 to the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, the Hon Alan Griffin MP, regarding the review of the pension indexation arrangements in Australian Government civilian and military superannuation schemes that was conducted by Mr Trevor Matthews. Your letter was referred to me for my consideration as the Minister responsible for public sector superannuation.

I apologise for the delay in responding.

I acknowledge that the review findings by Mr Matthews and the Government response may have caused disappointment for some recipients of Australian Government civilian and military pensions.

Mr Matthews is an international leader in the global pensions and life insurance industry, an Australian citizen, past president of the Institute of Actuaries of Australia, and currently a prominent actuary in the United Kingdom. As such he was eminently qualified to carry out an independent review of the pension indexation arrangements in the Australian Government civilian and military superannuation schemes.

I note your comments on the possible use of the Pension and Beneficiary Living Cost Index (PBLCI) in relation to the indexation of Commonwealth superannuation pensions.

Mr Matthews did recommend consideration of the use of an alternative index for Australian Government civilian and military pensions, but only if a robust index becomes available which reflects the price inflation experience of superannuants better than the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

The PBLCI focuses on the changes in the living costs of age pensioners, carers and disability support recipient households. As I have been advised, the Australian Bureau of Statistics derived the PBLCI by combining the age pensioner Analytical Living Cost Indexes (ALCI) and the other government transfer recipients ALCI.

Therefore, the PBLCI is not an index in relation to the living costs of superannuants. It has not been derived from the self-funded retiree ALCI, which was the index that Mr Matthews discussed in his report.

Mr Matthews also did not find that it is inequitable or unfair that civilian and military pensions are increased differently to the Age or Service pensions, as they are different benefits provided for different purposes.

The Government fully supports Mr Matthews' findings and recommendations, and has no plans to move away from the CPI for indexing the pensions of Commonwealth superannuants.

Thank you for taking the time to write on this issue.

Yours sincerely
Lindsay Tanner
16 Nov 2009

So Mr Tanner believes the CPI is an appropriate indexation for military personnel but not himself. Why doesn't Mr Tanner index his superannuation to the CPI instead of the very generous indexation he enjoys? How do you spell hypocrisy Mr Tanner?

This is what Mr Tanners colleagues have said about the PBLCI.

VETERANS' AFFAIRS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (BUDGET MEASURES) BILL 2009

VETERANS' AFFAIRS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (PENSION REFORM) BILL 2009

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 13 August and 19 August, on motions by **Senator Ludwig** and **Senator Evans**:

Senator JOHNSTON (Western Australia) (7.30 pm)—
From the outset I want to say that the opposition supports both of these important measures.

"The specific increases are \$32.50 per week for single service pensioners and a combined \$10.15 per week, rounded up, for couples on the maximum rate. War widows and widowers will benefit from an increase of \$30 per week. Income support supplement recipients will also receive an increase in the supplement and the ceiling rate will be increased.

There is a new index being applied to the service pension. It is indexed twice a year and the bill has a new index which it is proposed be known as the pensioner and beneficiary living cost index—the PBLCI.

The maximum basic rate of service pension will be increased in line with the pensioner and beneficiary living cost index.

The PBLCI will be used to adjust the maximum basic pension rate when movement of the PBLCI is greater than the movement of the CPI for the relevant indexation period.

*I understand that the rationale for the new PBLCI is the desire to have **an index that more closely resembles the cost of living expenses experienced by pensioners.**"*

Senator STEPHENS (New South Wales — Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector and Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Prime Minister for Social Inclusion) (7.39 pm)

*"As Senator Johnston said, a new pensioner and beneficiary living cost index will be introduced **that actually measures the cost of living for pensioners.** From 20 September 2009 the maximum basic rate of **income support pensions will be adjusted in line with either the consumer price index or the new Pensioner and Beneficiary Living Cost Index, whichever is the higher.** The bill increases the relativity of the single-rate pension to 66.33 per cent of the maximum rate payable to a couple, up from the current 60 per cent.*

The current complex system of allowances and supplementary payments will be simplified by the

introduction of a new pension supplement. A new senior supplement—for holders of the Commonwealth seniors health card or certain gold card holders over qualifying age—will replace the existing seniors concession allowance and the telephone allowance.

The bill establishes two new supplements to replace pharmaceutical and telephone allowances for those veterans, members and dependants who do not receive a Veterans' Affairs or a social security income support payment. The veterans supplement will replace the pharmaceutical and telephone allowances under the Veterans' Entitlements Act and the MRCA supplement will replace the pharmaceutical and telephone allowances under the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act. These new supplements will also commence on 20 September this year.

A work bonus will be established to provide an incentive for those who want to take up or continue to undertake paid work after they reach pension age. With this bonus only 50 per cent of the first \$500 a fortnight of employment income will be counted in the income test. The reforms in the bill introduce greater flexibility to the pension advance arrangements from 1 July 2010 and, to secure a pension system that is sustainable into the future, the government will tighten the pension income test to ensure that the pension system is targeted at those most in need. So from 20 September 2009 the pension income test taper rate will increase from 40c to 50c for each dollar of income over the income-test-free area. In addition, to bring the veterans' entitlements income test in line with other means tested payments, the additional income-test-free area for dependent children will be removed."

Schedule 2 – Indexation using the Pensioner and Beneficiary Living Cost Index

Summary

This measure allows for the indexation of the maximum basic rate of service pension to a new index, the Pensioner and Beneficiary Living Cost Index (PBLCI). This new index will be used to adjust the maximum basic pension rate where movement in the PBLCI is greater than movement in the CPI for the relevant indexation period.

Background

Currently, the maximum basic rates of service pension are increased in line with movements in the CPI on 20 March and 20 September of each year to produce an 'indexed amount'. If, for singles, the indexed amount is lower than 25 per cent of MTAW, the indexed amount is increased to at least 25 per cent of MTAW.

The Australian Statistician is developing a new index, the PBLCI, to measure specifically changes in the cost of living experienced by pensioner and beneficiary households. To ensure that pension rates keep up with increases in the cost of living experienced by pensioners, this index is being introduced into pension rate calculations in social security law and to service pension rate calculations by this Schedule, so that movements in the CPI can be compared to movements in the PBLCI. The maximum basic rate of service pension will be indexed in line with whichever of

these two indices has increased by a greater amount, before benchmarking to MTAW.

Schedule 5 – Adjustments because of Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme

Summary

Due to timing discrepancies between the introduction of the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (Household Assistance) Bill 2009 and this bill, it was not possible for the increases to pension payments to be accurately drafted and included in the earlier bill.

Pensions will be increased to compensate recipients of those payments for anticipated increases in the cost of living arising out of the introduction of the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS).

The amendments proposed in this bill will also remove the legislative instrument powers that were included in the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (Household Assistance) Bill 2009 to ensure the Government's commitments as set out in the

White Paper for the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme could be implemented despite the original timing discrepancy.

Background

In broad terms, this Schedule amends what will become the *Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (Household Assistance) Act 2009*.

This Schedule provides for increases to pension payments as a result of expected increases in the living cost index arising from the introduction of the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. Pensioners will receive an increase to payments totalling 2.8 per cent over the first two years of the scheme.

Certain pension rates will be increased by a total of 2.8 per cent over the first two years of the scheme. This includes a 1 per cent increase from 1 July 2011 and a further 1.8 per cent increase on 1 July 2012, including upfront indexation. The 1 per cent increase on 1 July 2011 incorporates a 0.4 per cent component that represents a bring forward on future CPI increases. The 1.8 per cent increase on 1 July 2012 incorporates a 0.8 per cent component that represents a bring-forward on future CPI increases. The 0.4 per cent and the 0.8 per cent figures represent the two expected increases in the CPI as a result of the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme.

This Schedule will commence immediately after the commencement of Part 1 of Schedule 3 to the *Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme Amendment (Household Assistance) Act 2009* but, if that Part does not commence, then the provisions of this Schedule do not commence at all.

House of Representatives Hansard 19 August 2009

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (11.02 am) - ALP

We are developing a **new index**—the Australian Bureau of Statistics will do that—to **reflect the real cost-of-living changes for pensioners**.

It has been a complaint from many of my constituents that their real costs are much greater than the CPI. This new index will be known as the pensioner and beneficiary living cost index. The bill before the House provides for pension rates to be adjusted each March and September by whichever is greater, the CPI or what will become known as the PBLCI. On the linkages: as I said before, the bill sets the rate of single pensions at 66.33 per cent of the combined couple rate, which is equivalent to 27.7 per cent of MTAW, and that is important because that is an increase, again, on the current 25 per cent.

Mr BALDWIN (Paterson) (11.19 am) - LIB

One area of great concern to our veteran community is the way in which their pensions are indexed. **Currently, their pensions are indexed by the CPI**, which many believe **does not reflect the true cost of living increases** experienced by pensioners and beneficiaries.

Under the new measures, the maximum basic rate of a service pension will be indexed to the CPI or the pensioner and beneficiary living cost index, whichever is the greater.

The new arrangements are designed to **better reflect the cost-of-living increases experienced by pensioners and beneficiaries, whose costs may increase faster than those of the general community**. I certainly hope that the PBLCI, which was recently developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, will serve this purpose. I also urge the government to redress this issue if the PBLCI fails to address the cost-of-living increases that pensioners, including veterans, experience.

Ms HALL (Shortland) (11.37 am) - ALP

One of the major reforms is the changes to the indexation and benchmarking of income support pensions. New indexation arrangements will better reflect cost of living increases for pensioners and the ABS will calculate the new pensioner and beneficiary living cost index, which will be known as the PBLCI.

This index has been designed to **better reflect the cost of living and the costs incurred by pensioners and veterans**. From 20 September, the maximum basic rate of relevant veterans pensions will be adjusted in line with the PBLCI or the consumer index, whichever is the highest. No matter what happens, our veterans will not lose. Pension rates will also continue to be benchmarked to the male average weekly earnings.

This is really good legislation. It delivers an increase to our veterans and a change to the way veterans pensions and veterans affairs payments are made, and it delivers those things in a way that ensures veterans will receive more income.

Mr HALE (Solomon) (12.13 pm) - ALP

The pension reform package introduces a new pensioner and beneficiary living costs index. The new living costs index recognises that the **cost of living for pensioners and beneficiaries may increase faster than the cost of living for the general community, as measured by the consumer price index**.

From September this year the maximum base rate of income support pensions will be adjusted in line with either the consumer price index or the new pensioner and beneficiary living costs index, whichever is higher.

Mr GRIFFIN (Bruce—Minister for Veterans' Affairs) (12.45 pm) - ALP

A significant improvement will be made to the indexation of income support pensions, benchmarking them against **a more realistic indicator of changes to the cost of living for pensioners**. The pension reform package introduces a new pensioner and beneficiary living cost index that **actually measures the cost of living for pensioners**.

The new pensioner and beneficiary living cost index recognises that the cost of living for pensioners and beneficiaries may increase faster than the cost of living for the general community, as measured by the consumer price index. From 20 September 2009 the maximum base rate of income support pensions will be adjusted in line with either the consumer price index or the new pensioner and beneficiary living cost index, whichever is the higher.

Hansard - Tuesday, 15 September 2009 House Of Representatives

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga—Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs) (4.01 pm)—by leave—This weekend, the most significant reforms to the pension system in 100 years will start being rolled out. From Sunday, around 3.3 million age pensioners, disability support pensioners, carers, wife and widow pensioners and veteran income support recipients will receive an increase in their pension payments.

Improved pension indexation

We have also introduced new indexation arrangements to respond to cost of living increases that pensioners face. A new pensioner and beneficiary living cost index has been developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics to better

reflect the spending patterns of pensioner and other households who rely on income support.

This new index provides another layer of protection for pensioners to help their pension keep pace with increases in the prices of the goods they buy. When the base pension rate is adjusted twice each year in March and September, it will be adjusted according to which has increased more—either the consumer price index (CPI) or the new pensioner and beneficiary living cost index.

Over the last six months, the government's new pensioner living cost index has resulted in a higher pension indexation increase than the CPI. As a result of indexation the base rate pension is \$5.50 for singles and \$9.20 for couples combined. This is driven by the six-month movement of one per cent in the pensioner living cost index. Just to compare, over the same period, the CPI only increased by 0.6 per cent.

So pensioners will see an immediate benefit from the application of this new index from 20 September, when the next indexation increase will be delivered.

This measure delivers the government's election commitment to improve pension indexation to make sure that we keep the pension in touch with pensioners' living costs.

Base pension rates will also continue to be benchmarked against improvements in wages as measured by male total average weekly earnings (MTAWE). From 20 March 2010, the benchmark for single pensioners will increase from 25 per cent—which is its current benchmark—to 27.7 per cent of male total average weekly earnings. The benchmark for a couple will be 41.76 per cent of male total average weekly earnings.

These indexation changes are consistent with the findings of the Harmer review and are guaranteed by legislation.

(Military and veterans pensions were excluded from the Harmer Review even though veterans were **PROMISED** they would be included).

VETERANS' AFFAIRS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (MISCELLANEOUS MEASURES) BILL 2009

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Griffin.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr GRIFFIN (Bruce—Minister for Veterans' Affairs) (10.40 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to present legislation that will give effect to a number of minor measures and amendments that will enhance the administration of the Veterans' Affairs portfolio.

This bill will introduce measures that will improve the way

we provide support to our veterans and Australian Defence Force personnel.

These changes will ensure Australia's veteran and defence force communities receive the compensation, benefits and entitlements they deserve and in a timely manner.

They are a demonstration of the government's commitment to continually review, update and improve the services and support we provide to our current and former military personnel. The bill will extend eligibility to certain Australian Protective Service officers deployed at the Australian nuclear test sites for the period 20 October 1984 to 30 June 1988.

This period is within the extension period recently granted to Commonwealth and Australian Federal Police which was

intended to include Australian Protective Service officers for the duration of the extension.

However, due to organisational changes to the Australian Protective Service, Australian Protective Service officers were not eligible as nuclear test participants for the period 20 October 1984 to 30 June 1988. This bill will rectify that situation.

The bill will also enable Defence Service Homes Insurance to pay a State Emergency Service levy, collected from Defence Service Homes Insurance policy holders, to the New South Wales government to assist with the cost of providing emergency services in that state.

In addition, the bill will extend, from three months to twelve months, the period within which claims for non-treatment related travel expenses may be lodged under the Veterans' Entitlements Act.

This will benefit veterans and their dependants who travel for non-treatment related purposes such as attending review meetings or obtaining medical evidence.

Furthermore, the bill will enable certain entities under the Veterans' Entitlements Act and the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act to specify the manner in which notices and other documents may be served.

This will ensure that the legal effect of such notices and documents is protected. The bill will make it clear that the Specialist Medical Review Council may review a decision of the Repatriation Medical Authority to not amend a Statement of Principles.

The bill also provides for the Specialist Medical Review Council to review both versions of a Statement of Principles that relate to a particular condition even if an applicant has requested a review of only one of the Statements of Principles.

Other amendments in the bill will ensure that the policy in relation to an initial war or defence-caused injury or disease that is aggravated, or materially contributed to, by service under the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act and the payment of a pension to the dependant of a veteran who was a prisoner of war, operate as originally intended.

The bill will protect the interests of certain compensation recipients under the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act by requiring that the compensation payment is made to an account in the recipient's name.

Finally, the bill will enable a Victoria Cross recipient to receive both Victoria Cross allowance under the Veterans' Entitlements Act and a Victoria Cross allowance or annuity from a foreign country.

These proposed changes will result in positive outcomes for many.

This bill continues the government's ongoing commitment to supporting Australia's current and former service personnel and their families and ensuring their wellbeing now and into the future.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate (on motion by Dr Stone) adjourned.

South Australia Peacetime Service Memorial

On the 1st May 2009 a Dedication Ceremony was conducted on the Pathway of Honour, Torrens Parade Ground, Adelaide, to dedicate a Peacetime Memorial on behalf of the Injured Service Persons Association in South Australia.

The Master of Ceremonies was the Secretary of the South Australian Sub Branch, Mr Jeffery Crase. He served in the CMF from 1971 to 1973, when he joined the RAAF and served until 1995.

His speech to all in attendance states just what the memorial means to the ISPA and to all serving members of our Defence Force. His speech is as follows:

"On behalf of the Injured Service Persons Association I would like to welcome you here today.

I especially welcome The Honorable Michael Atkinson MP, South Australian Attorney- General and State Veteran's Affairs Minister,

The Honorable Caroline Schaefer MLC, representing Mr Martin Hamilton-Smith, Leader of the State Opposition and ex SAS Regiment Commander,

Navy Chaplain Graham Pitman and Army Chaplain Peter Ryan,

Squadron Leader Richard Coulthard, representing all Service personnel,

Mr Peter Coulson representing, Mr Jock Statton OAM President of the State Returned and Services League,

Mr Bill Denny AM Chairman of the ANZAC Day Commemoration Council,

Mr John Barnett OAM President of the Gilles Plains RSL, and

Other Association representatives,

Ladies and Gentlemen

This memorial is a very special memorial dedicated to all those Servicemen and Women who have been killed or injured, whilst on Peacetime Duty or Peacetime Operations in Australia and Overseas.

The Injured Service Persons Association believes families and friends of Service Personnel killed on duty need a Memorial such as this. It is somewhere for them to reflect and remember, and a place to lay a tribute in memory of their loved one.

When a Government commits the men and women of our Defence Forces to War or Overseas Operational Duty, Service personnel understand that they face danger. Whilst they may not admit it, they realize that active service and operational duty bring a greater risk of death or injury.

But, when members of the Australian Defence Force are on normal peacetime duties, within their own country or on humanitarian operations overseas, the expectation and risk of death or injury is much removed, even though the

circumstances, in which they serve, may nevertheless be hazardous.

Accidents do happen however, and generally they happen at a much higher frequency than they do outside the military, and it is a sobering reminder to us all, that Service Personnel do not enjoy a normal workplace and much of what they do, as part of their normal duties is hazardous, demanding and dangerous.

Unfortunately, the ever present danger within the Defence Force will continue, we should never forget this, and always remember those Service Personnel that have been killed or injured in peacetime.

The plaque on the memorial is deliberately worded in generic terms because sadly, young men and women within our Defence Force will continue to be killed or injured as they train and serve us, either here in Australia or overseas.

Our association web site has an honour roll, which is still being added too as I speak, and will continue to expand into the future. Recent research on the National Archives website has revealed another 190 training deaths. To date there are 620 names on this honour roll.

On behalf of the association I would now like to thank those who helped make this memorial a reality, the contributing funds for this memorial came from the ANZAC Day Commemoration Council, Special Air Service Regiment at Campbell Barracks in Perth, and the Gilles Plains RSL.

To those organizations that contributed, I thank you for your support and it will not be forgotten.

We must always remember if a young Australian is wearing the uniform in our Defence Forces, then they have chosen to offer their lives in the service of this nation. Accordingly, they deserve to be respected and honoured”

We will remember them always.



Media Releases

Veterans' Needs Shape Review of Advocacy Services

Wednesday, 21 October 2009

Minister for Veterans' Affairs Alan Griffin today provided an update on the review of Government-funded veteran advocacy and welfare services.

Mr Griffin said an ageing population of veterans and war widows, and an increasing number of younger ex-service members and their families meant that support delivery may need adjusting.

"Advocacy and welfare services need to be responsive to the different service experiences and needs of the ex-service community, both young and old," Mr Griffin said.

"Ex-service organisations (ESO) provide many of these services, however, we see less younger veterans joining these organisations and they may not have access to their entitled support.

"Also of concern is that ESOs are supporting an ageing veteran community with complex welfare needs, relying on a similarly ageing volunteer force to do so."

The Department of Veterans' Affairs is undertaking the Review which will examine the Building Excellence in Support and Training (BEST) program, Training and Information Program (TIP) and Veteran and Community Grants Program — looking broadly at the interdependencies and interactions between the three programs.

"Over the past few weeks, my Department has conducted focus groups with key stakeholders, and invited ESO leaders and BEST grant applicants from across Australia to make submissions to the Review process," Mr Griffin said.

"Individual members of the veteran community can contribute their views through online submissions or by writing directly to the Review Team."

Mr Griffin said the Review will also consider recommendations in Professor Dunt's suicide report regarding advocacy arrangements for the veteran community.

"The Review will help inform further improvements to advocacy and welfare support to the ex-service community," he said.

For more information about the Review, including the Terms of Reference and to make a submission, visit www.dva.gov.au/grants.

Mental Health Support Available For Veteran Community

Friday, 9 October 2009

On the eve of World Mental Health Day, the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin, has encouraged members of the veteran community to seek appropriate help for mental health issues.

Mr Griffin said the VVCS – Veterans and Veterans Families

Counselling Service provided counselling and group programs to Australian veterans, peacekeepers, their families and eligible Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel.

"Some veterans and their family members experience mental health problems as a result of their Service. I urge any veteran or veterans' family member who wants more information about improving their mental health to contact the VVCS on **1800 011 046**," Mr Griffin said.

"Even if you are dealing with my Department on compensation or other matters, don't wait to address your mental health issues. VVCS is a free, confidential and responsive service that can provide you with the support you need when you need it most."

Mr Griffin said World Mental Health Day provided an opportunity to reach out, not only to veterans, but also to widows, wives, partners, children and mates.

"Almost 50,000 veterans have a mental health disability, so I understand that the treatment of illnesses such as PTSD and related conditions is very close to the hearts of those in the ex-service community."

Mr Griffin said the Government was doing more now to assist veterans and transitioning ADF members with mental health-related problems, than ever before in the history of Australia's participation in conflicts and peace operations.

"In addition to the \$145 million spent on veteran's mental health annually, the Government has allocated \$92 million over four years to better meet the mental health needs of veterans and current and former serving members of the ADF, including \$9.5m to my Department to implement recommendations from Professor Dunt's *Independent Study into Suicide in the Ex-service community*," Mr Griffin said.

Other initiatives include \$5.5 million for the Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health to develop ADF and veteran-specific mental health initiatives, more free Operation *Life* suicide prevention workshops for people who are concerned about family, friends, mates or others in the veteran and ex-service community. The At Ease website (www.at-ease.dva.gov.au) also provides veteran-specific information on common mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and substance misuse, and links to mental health services and other resources.

"These programs demonstrate the Government's commitment to mental health awareness and treatment across the veteran community. However, there is always be more that can be done, and we will continue to do more."

World Mental Health Day raises public awareness about mental health issues. The Day promotes more open discussion of illnesses, and investments in prevention and treatment services. For more information, visit www.wfmh.org. Tomorrow (Saturday) is also National PTSD Awareness Day and Mr Griffin will speak at King's Park (near the Carillion), Lake Burley Griffin, Canberra,

from 1.50pm.

Australian Defence Force Refutes Drug Use in Afghanistan Claim

22 November 2009

The Australian Defence Force (ADF) refutes the claim in today's Sunday Telegraph and Sunday Mail Brisbane that members of the ADF are using illicit drugs while deployed on tours of duty in Afghanistan and are returning home addicted. The ADF had recently provided detailed responses to the journalists responsible for this article and deplores the fact that they chose to omit much of the information provided to them in search of a headline.

The ADF has conducted Prohibited Substance Testing in Afghanistan since 2005. Since testing commenced all test results for members of the ADF deployed on operations in Afghanistan have been negative.

"On the basis of these results today's story is completely baseless," the Chief of the Defence Force, Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston said.

Tests conducted under the Prohibited Substance Testing Program include both random testing (where personnel are randomly selected for testing) and targeted testing (where information is considered and personnel are targeted for testing on the basis of information brought to the attention of the command).

The Prohibited Substance Testing Program is conducted in accordance with the appropriate Australian/New Zealand Standard and tests for the following five drug classes: Benzodiazepines, Cocaine, Methylamphetamines, Opiates (including heroin) and Cannabis. In addition, the Australian Defence Force members may also be tested for the use of steroids.

Between 16 June 2005 and 31 August 2009, more than 35,000 tests were conducted on ADF members, both in Australia and those deployed overseas on operations. The average rate of positive results over that period has been 1.54 percent.

The Australian Defence Force positive test percentage of 0.98 percent for the current Fiscal Year (July to August 2009) is lower than that recorded against the preceding FYs (05/06: 1.76 percent, 06/07: 1.81 percent, 07/08: 1.52 percent and 08/09: 1.29 percent). The low use of prohibited substances by the Australian Defence Force members is attributed to the selection and recruitment process, education and the culture of non-tolerance.

Australian Navy Delivers Aid for Tonga Recovery

18 November 2009

The Royal Australian Navy's heavy landing ship HMAS Tobruk has anchored off the coast of the Tongan island of Niuatoputapu and has commenced its humanitarian aid delivery to Tonga, following the tsunami that devastated the island on 30 September 2009. This initiative constitutes the second leg of Tobruk's support to the Pacific, having recently stopped in Samoa to render similar assistance.

At the outset of the operation, Tobruk took delivery of a Landing Craft Mechanised (LCM8) and two Lighter

Amphibious Resupply Carriages (LARC'V') from 10 Force Support Battalion based at Townsville's Ross Island Barracks and they have been vital in transporting supplies and reconstruction material provided by AusAID to the communities of Niuatoputapu.

HMAS Tobruk is currently in the Pacific Islands region, delivering over 500 tonnes of much needed equipment and public donations to assist with the re-establishment of vital infrastructure and ensure affected communities have access to essential services such as power, water, health facilities and education.

"Phase two of Operation Samoa Assist requires Tobruk to land supplies and aid stores to allow local authorities on Niuatoputapu to start rebuilding after the severe damage caused by the tsunami and assist them to move forward," said the ships Commanding Officer, Commander Peter Thompson.

"After the success of the efforts in Samoa, the ship's crew is extremely excited about continuing the humanitarian relief work, this time on the small island of Niuatoputapu."

The AusAID relief package onboard Tobruk consists of heavy earthmoving equipment to assist with clearance and reconstruction on the island, building materials and gardening supplies. The humanitarian aid consignment also includes items donated by Non-Government Organisations in Australia and a large consignment of donated goods from the Australian public.

The delivery of this aid will bring the total assistance by the Australian Government, Non Government Organisations and the Australian public to Samoa and Tonga to \$13 million.

Defence Support to Families

13 November 2009

Recent media reporting that Defence will cut 74 jobs from the Defence Community Organisation (DCO), reducing the services provided to Defence families is inaccurate.

In the current high tempo environment, DCO and the support it provides to Defence families are of the highest priority to the Chief of the Defence Force and the Service Chiefs.

For this reason, the Defence White Paper has actually provided DCO with additional staff and resources, meaning more 'front line' capacity.

Head of Defence Support Operations, Major General Elizabeth Cosson, said that a workforce review is being conducted to ensure that DCO positions its workforce in the right places to provide the best support to ADF personnel and their families.

"The options under consideration in the workforce review are designed to enhance the support provided to Defence families in a balanced and sustainable way," Major General Cosson said.

Major General Cosson also said the review remained underway and no final decisions had been made.

DCO is the lead agency within Defence for the provision

of support services to families. The services provided include crisis and bereavement support, through to access to childcare, education assistance and community support.

Improved Death and Invalidity Benefits for Members of the Military Superannuation and Benefits Scheme

22 October 2009

Greg Combet, Minister for Defence Personnel, Materiel and Science, announced today that the Rudd Government will improve death and invalidity benefits for members of the Military Superannuation and Benefits Scheme (MSBS).

Mr Combet announced that the Rudd Government has decided that, backdated from 1 July 2007, benefits for death and invalidity payments will be calculated in line with recent changes to the compulsory retirement age for ADF members.

"For those eligible, this decision will result in an average increase in death or invalidity payments for eligible persons of approximately 20 per cent, depending on their circumstances," Mr Combet said.

The previous Government changed the compulsory retirement age for the majority of ADF members from age 55 to age 60 from 1 July 2007. That change was not intended to impact on the Superannuation benefits of ADF members and no funding for any such changes was provided at that time.

The policy decision taken by the Rudd Government makes this intention clear and funds this decision.

"Benefit payments paid after 1 July 2007 that may have eligibility will be reviewed as a matter of priority and, where necessary, adjustments will be made," Mr Combet said.

"Affected parties will be advised of any change in benefits as soon as the review has been completed and any increased benefit amount will be paid with interest.

I am also pleased that increasing prospective service to calculate death or invalidity benefits for the Military Superannuation Benefits scheme results in a positive outcome for ADF members and their families, especially in their time of need," Mr Combet said.

Mr Combet said that death and invalidity benefits for members of the Defence Force Retirement and Death

Benefits Scheme are not affected because benefits in this scheme are based on a percentage of salary and not linked to age.

Personal Details of Soldier Killed At Cultana, South Australia

21 October 2009

It is with great sadness that the Department of Defence announces the tragic death last night of Lance Corporal Mason Edwards at Cultana, South Australia.

Lance Corporal Edwards, a member of the 2nd Commando Regiment, was part of a Special Forces night training activity with live ammunition. The activity was associated with mission specific training for an upcoming deployment to Afghanistan.

The Chief of Army, Lieutenant General Ken Gillespie, extended his deepest condolences to the family, friends and unit colleagues of Lance Corporal Edwards, who was a very well-respected soldier.

"I know Mason was a committed and determined soldier; tremendously proud of his service and his mates with whom he served," Lieutenant General Gillespie said.

"I can tell you that he considered himself lucky to live in this great country and to have the love and support of his family and partner."

Lance Corporal Edwards was awarded the Australian Defence Medal, Australian Service Medal, Australian Active Service Medal, and the Afghanistan Campaign Medal.

Lance Corporal Edwards deployed to Timor Leste with Alpha Commando Company in 2006. In May 2007 he deployed on his first tour of duty in Afghanistan with the Special Forces Task Group. He returned to Afghanistan in June 2008.

The other soldier, from the Incident Response Regiment injured in the incident is in a satisfactory condition. For privacy reasons, personal details of the injured colleague will not be released.

Army and the wider Defence community is doing everything it can to assist and support the families through this very difficult time.

FREELING MEATS

DROP IN TO SEE DAVE

Mon, Wed & Fri 8am - 5.30pm Tues & Thurs 8am - 7pm; Sat 8am - 12.30pm

Phone: 8525 2100

Servicing Freeling & Surrounding Areas

3 Hanson Street, Freeling

DVA Annual Report 2008–2009

The following information is reproduced from the DVA annual report which can be found in its entirety at <http://www.dva.gov.au/aboutDVA/publications/corporate/annualreport/Pages/index.aspx>.

Review of Military Compensation Arrangements

The Review of Military Compensation Arrangements, a government commitment to examine the current military rehabilitation and compensation system, began in April 2009 and is one of the more significant activities impacting on the Act and Commission, since their inception in 2004.

The Chair of the MRCC is the chair of the steering committee appointed by the Minister for Veterans' Affairs to oversee the Review. Major General Craig Orme, Defence's member of the MRCC, is also on the steering committee as are Ms Peta Furnell, from the Department of the Treasury; Ms Joan Ross, Department of Finance and Deregulation; Ms Michelle Baxter, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations; and Mr Peter Sutherland, an independent expert in military rehabilitation and compensation law and a Visiting Fellow at the Australian National University College of Law.

The Commission referred some of the matters before it in 2008–09 to the Review. These matters included an examination of the issues related to transitioning from the VEA to the MRCA, a consideration of the difference in permanent impairment compensation between peacetime and warlike/non-warlike service under the MRCA, and a consideration of issues relating to compensation for dependants of deceased members under the MRCA, particularly in light of the recent amendment to the SRCA regarding payments to dependants for deaths in compensable circumstances.

The Review's terms of reference can be found at Output 1.7 of the Department's annual report and its website at www.dva.gov.au along with most of the 50 submissions to the steering committee.

Same sex amendments to the MRCA and SRCA

Effective 1 July 2009, all de facto couples have the same entitlements under the VEA, MRCA and SRCA regardless of sexual orientation or gender. These amendments come under the Australian Government's reforms of legislation covering same sex relationships.

The MRCC and the Department worked closely with Comcare and the Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations to draft the reforms to the MRCA, with the result that the VEA and the MRCA's definitions of a de facto partner vary slightly to the SRCA's. This divergence, which would only very rarely result in a different outcome, arises from the need to align the MRCA with the VEA and in turn the Social Security Act (SSA). The Commission agreed that it was more important for the MRCA to mirror the VEA rather than the SRCA as the Minister for Veterans' Affairs was responsible for the MRCA and the VEA, even though the Department administered the SRCA, and that the number of service personnel eligible under both the MRCA and SRCA would continue to decrease, but both the VEA income support and certain

treatment provisions as well as the SSA will continue to apply to MRCA claimants.

Improved service delivery through risk-based differentiation of claims

The MRCC agreed in principle to the concept of risk-based differentiation of claims made under the MRCA to improve client service, where claims with assessed low risks are processed quickly with fewer documentary requirements, mid-risk claims attract early close attention and assistance, and clients with high needs such as serious injury or major psychiatric conditions are supported with a more personalised service and facilitation of issues across the Department. The Commission directed that the Department refine its business model to support the concept, including developing further criteria for low risk claims.

Protocol for managing provision of advice to clients at risk of self-harm

The MRCC and the Repatriation Commission considered a protocol for managing the provision of advice to clients at risk of self harm, expanding on its existing case conferencing procedures by obtaining input from treating health professionals about the best means of delivering the advice. The protocol lays down standard, clear and strong work practices for the identification of a client at risk of self-harm, and the provision of suitable advice.

Following the recommendations of the Dunt review of suicide in the ex-service community, the government agreed to introduce the protocol.

Single Claim Form

The MRCC and the Repatriation Commission agreed to the implementation of a Single Claim Form to be used for claims under any of the VEA, the MRCA and the SRCA. The rationale is to simplify claims under more than one Act and to relieve the administrative burden upon claimants and staff.

The Single Claim Form has been in development for some time. It was first mooted around the time of the MRCA's commencement, but was postponed due to tight timeframes and to allow staff to become familiar with the new Act. The Department has since agreed to guiding principles for claims processing and then tested a draft form in June 2008. The first stage of the Department's implementation of the Single Claim Form was a trial in May and June 2009 at the Department's Perth, Melbourne and Brisbane offices. Stage two of the form's introduction, national implementation, will commence pending an evaluation of the trial.

Output 1.5: Incapacity and other compensation payments under the SRCA

Objective: Provide incapacity payments, non-economic loss lump sums for injuries resulting in permanent impairment and payments to dependants of deceased employees through the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988 (SRCA).

The Department provides compensation to ADF members and former members under the SRCA for injuries resulting

in incapacity for work and permanent impairment, and to dependants of seriously injured or deceased members.

The SRCA covers injury resulting from service up to 30 June 2004 and is a separate Act for eligibility and range of benefits to those of the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986 (VEA) and the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004 (MRCA).

Measures

Number of payees and payments

The number of ADF incapacity payees, lump sum payments and payments to dependants in 2008–09 showed a decrease from last year's total of 4,338.

During the year a total amount of \$61.6 million was paid in incapacity compensation to 2,602 clients compared with \$55.3 million paid to 2,749 clients in 2007–08.

Critical error rate

The quality measure of 20% for 2008–09 was above the benchmark of 5%. An alignment exercise was conducted in late 2008 to early 2009 to explore the feasibility of introducing work elements for SRCA Initial Liability (IL) and Permanent Impairment (PI) quality assurance, as used in the VEA QA Program. The feasibility exercise saw a halving of the critical error rates and, as a result, work elements were introduced into SRCA IL and PI QA on 1 July 2009.

While some work has been completed to date in achieving a level of alignment with the VEA QA Program, the application of the VEA QA Program overall will be introduced from 1 October 2009 and a full review of MRCA/SRCA QA is expected to be completed by May 2010. This should see a significant reduction in the critical error rate.

Average time taken to process initial liability claims

Average time to process initial liability claims in 2008–09 was 151 days against a target of 120 days. This was a drop from 158 days last year and 234 days in 2006–07.

Average time taken to process new permanent impairment claims

During the year, 2,886 claims in respect of permanent impairment were received and decided in an average of 104 days against a target of 120 days. This is a significant reduction from the 3,326 claims received in the previous year and decided in an average time of 119 days.

Average age of claims on hand

The average age of claims on hand fell from 108 to 105 days during the year due to the increased emphasis on claims management. Table 21 shows SRCA claims on hand by age for the past three years.

Table 21. Number of claims on hand by age 2007–09 (SRCA)

Age of claim	30 June 2007		30 June 2008		30 June 2009	
	No.	% of total	No.	% of total	No.	% of total
<= 4 months	755	60	868	68	941	68
4–6 months	209	17	185	14	141	10
6–12 months	232	19	213	17	290	21
> 12 months	46	4	8	1	7	< 1
Total	1,242	100	1,274	100	1,379	100

SRCA activity

Table 22 shows number and type of activity undertaken in administering the SRCA over the past three years.

Table 22. Volume of SRCA activity 2007–09

	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09
New initial liability claims received	3,130	3,327	3,469
Number of incapacity payees (including dependent children)	2,982	2,749	2,602
New permanent impairment claims received	3,571	3,326	2,886
New rehabilitation referrals received	659	530	503
Total accounts paid (including medical, household services and attendant care)	107,782	100,769	100,027
New reconsideration requests received	1,101	811	733
New applications made to AAT	279	205	170

Compensation for military deaths

A lump sum payment may be provided for dependants for deaths in compensable circumstances. During the year the proclamation of the Employment and Workplace Relations Amendment Act 2009 amended the value of benefits under section 17 of the SRCA. The amendment applies retrospectively to all compensable deaths occurring on and from 13 May 2008.

Death benefits to be paid are \$412,000, with a further lump sum under the Defence Act 1903 of \$67,769 for each dependant child. Weekly payments of \$113.30 for those children who are dependant at the time of death, funeral expenses of up to \$9,575.91 and reimbursement under the Defence Act 2003 of the cost of seeking financial advice are also payable.

Output 1.6: Merit reviews under the SRCA

Objective: Administer individual merit reviews of Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988 (SRCA) decisions.

Measures

Number of applications

The number of Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) applications that proceeded to hearing remained low at 11%. This was a result of the Department's focus on active management of AAT cases to early resolution by conciliation conferences convened by the AAT. In those cases decided at a formal hearing, 82% of the original decisions were affirmed.

Quality

Quality of service is measured by a client satisfaction survey that is usually conducted annually. The 2008–09 survey was postponed to the second half of 2009 but level of satisfaction during the year is expected to remain comparable with last year's results.

Reconsiderations and appeals

A client may ask for a reconsideration of a reviewable decision by an officer not involved in the original decision. Where the client is not satisfied with a reconsideration decision, the next avenue of review is the AAT.

During the year the Department undertook activity to reconsider SRCA decisions and refer appeals against decisions to the AAT. Table 23 shows results of reconsiderations and appeals over the past three years.

Table 23. Results of reconsiderations and appeals under SRCA 2007–09

	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09
Requests for reconsideration received	1101	811	733
Requests for reconsideration decided	1141	350	762
Decisions affirmed at reconsideration	869	253	497
Applications to the AAT	279	205	170
AAT applications decided	278	238	201
AAT hearings	N/A	N/A	22
Decisions affirmed at hearing	N/A	N/A	18

Output 1.7: Payments under the MRCA

Objective: Provide incapacity payments, non-economic loss lump sums for injuries resulting in permanent impairment and payments to dependants of deceased ADF members under the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004* (MRCA) and related legislation.

Performance Report

KPI	Measure	Estimate/target 2008–09 PBS	Variation PAES	Outcome 2008–09
Quantity	Number of lump sum payments	370	450	402
	Number of incapacity payees	745	1,000	925
Price	Estimated per payee	\$2,643	\$4,591	\$6,758
Quality	Critical errors	< 5%	–	20%

Measures

Number of lump sum payments

The number of lump sum payments made during the year was lower than expected. The variation was due to a 10% reduction in the number of claims for permanent impairment payments.

Number of incapacity payees

The number of incapacity payees during the year grew steadily without reaching the additional estimated figure. A total of \$18.7 million was paid to 925 clients compared to \$14.2 million paid to 731 clients in the previous year.

Critical error rate

The quality measure of 20% for 2008–09 was above the benchmark of 5%. This increase from the 2007–08 result of 13.1% is partly due to an eleven-fold increase in the number of cases checked this financial year. An alignment

exercise was conducted in late 2008 and early 2009 to explore the feasibility of introducing work elements for MRCA Initial Liability (IL) and Permanent Impairment (PI) quality assurance, as used in the VEA QA Program. The feasibility exercise saw a halving of the critical error rates and, as a result, work elements were introduced into MRCA IL and PI QA on 1 July 2009.

While some work has been completed to date in achieving a level of alignment with the VEA QA Program, the application of the VEA QA Program overall Error Definition will be introduced from 1 October 2009 and a full review of MRCA/SRCA QA is expected to be completed by May 2010. This should see a significant reduction in the critical error rate.

Average time taken to process initial liability claims

Average time to process initial liability claims in 2008–09 was 143 days against a target of 120 days. This was down from 153 days last year and 188 days in 2006–07.

Average time taken to process new permanent impairment claims

Average time to process permanent impairment claims in 2008–09 was 123 days against a target of 120 days, down from 130 days last year.

Table 25. Top 15 most frequently claimed disabilities (MRCA) using SoPs

<i>RMA SoP title</i>	<i>No. accepted</i>	<i>Acceptance rate %</i>	<i>No. rejected</i>	<i>Total</i>
1 Acute sprain and acute strain	594	85%	106	700
2 Fracture	330	87%	50	380
3 Internal derangement of the knee	177	73%	64	241
4 Lumbar spondylosis	179	78%	51	230
5 Chondromalacia patellae	112	60%	74	186
6 Sensori-neural hearing loss	117	65%	64	181
7 Osteoarthritis	118	67%	57	175
8 Intervertebral disc prolapse	128	78%	37	165
9 Rotator cuff syndrome	140	87%	21	161
10 Shin splints	138	91%	14	152
11 Dislocation	122	84%	24	146
12 Tinnitus	115	83%	24	139
13 Physical injury due to munitions discharge, and cuts, stabs, abrasions and lacerations	118	90%	13	131
14 Depressive disorders	79	61%	50	129
15 Posttraumatic stress disorder	69	78%	19	88
Total	2,536		668	3,204

Table 26. Volume of MRCA activity 2007–09

	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09
New initial liability claims received	2,113	2,450	3,180
Number of incapacity payees	405	731	925
New permanent impairment claims received	906	1,481	1,336
New rehabilitation referrals received	272	345	345
Total accounts paid (including medical, household services and attendant care)	12,534	9,179	8,782
New reconsideration requests received	185	248	295
New applications made to AAT	2	73	48

Number of applications

The number of Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) applications that proceeded to hearing remained low at 11%. This is a result of the Department's focus on active management of AAT cases to early resolution by conciliation conferences convened by the AAT. In those cases decided at a formal hearing, 82% of the original decisions were affirmed.

Table 27. Results of reconsiderations and appeals under MRCA 2007–09

Result	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09
Requests for reconsideration received	185	370	295
Requests for reconsideration decided	155	307	374
Decisions affirmed at reconsideration	113	205	218
Applications to the AAT	2	34	48
AAT applications decided	2	24	10
AAT hearings	N/A	N/A	4
Decisions affirmed at hearings	N/A	N/A	2
Applications to the VRB	N/A	89	88
VRB applications decided	N/A	36	136
Decisions affirmed by the VRB	N/A	20	116

Very few MRCA review applications proceeded to hearing by the AAT. The Department is presently awaiting the Tribunal's decision in one matter in particular relating to the transitional provisions of MRCA and the method for assessing permanent impairment where the client also has a permanent injury under SRCA.

Output 2.3: Medical, rehabilitation and other services under the SRCA

Objective: arrange for the delivery of medical, rehabilitation and other related services under the SRCA and related legislation.

Number of rehabilitation assessments

The number of rehabilitation assessments was up from last year as a result of the introduction of a needs assessment process for SRCA claims.

Number of medical and rehabilitation accounts paid

The result of 100,027 accounts paid in 2008–09 met the revised PAES target.

Critical error rate

The quality measure of 22% for 2008–09 was above the benchmark of 5%. This measure was not reported in last year's annual report. The business area has recently undertaken analysis of the errors and extensive training of accounts payable staff. This should see a significant improvement over the next financial year.

Output 2.4: Medical, rehabilitation and other services under the MRCA

Objective: arrange for the delivery of medical, rehabilitation and other related services under the MRCA and related legislation.

Number of rehabilitation assessments

The number of rehabilitation assessments was exactly on target for 2008–09. This result compares well with the 354 assessments conducted in 2007–08.

Number of medical and rehabilitation accounts paid

The number of medical and rehabilitation accounts was revised upwards in the PAES because of increased usage of the reimbursement of treatment costs pathway. The result of 8,782 accounts paid in 2008–09 was still above this revised estimate. The use of treatment cards has been more widely promoted and it is expected that the reimbursement pathway usage will decline.

Critical error rate

The quality measure of 26% for 2008–09 was well above the benchmark of 5%. This measure was not reported in last year's annual report. The business area has recently undertaken analysis of the errors and extensive training of accounts payable staff. This should see a significant improvement over the next financial year.

Protection of the word 'Anzac'

The Department received 32 submissions in relation to the Protection of the Word 'Anzac' Regulations. Of these, 19 applications to use the word were approved, eight were not approved and five required no further action as approval was not necessary for the requested purpose.

Military Compensation Review Public Meeting

The public meeting was held at the Sunnybrook hotel and conference centre, 355 Hume highway, Warwick Farm, NSW. Thursday, 24 September 2009. This is part of the transcript of that meeting.

The statement by Breeanna Till has been withheld. The parts reproduced here are courtesy of the DVA and the full transcript can be found at www.dva.gov.au and click on military compensation review.

MR R. BROWN: Yes, that's better. Yes, I'm with the Injured Service Persons Association (Peacetime Injuries). Just in regard to the makeup of the steering committee, I'm aware that there's a few ESOs out there who aren't really totally happy because it seems to be financially loaded in regards to that. What we're worried about, I suppose, is the impact that this would have, the financial aspect on recommendations. So what is the role of those finance – the treasury people in regard to this review?

MR BAYLES: Thanks, Ray, for the question. The review is, as you know, covering a very complex piece of legislation, and there are a range of issues that need to be considered in such a review, as there were when the scheme was being

developed in the early 2000s. There are a range of things that need to be taken into account, such as superannuation issues, the taxation issues, other benefits provided around the Commonwealth Workers' Compensation schemes from the

Commonwealth's perspective, such as Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act. So there's a range of issues that need to be brought together, and the committee that has been chosen by the Minister tries to draw on some expertise across a range of agencies.

And of course some of those agencies have expertise in some of these areas, so it was to provide a broad base of expertise from across the Commonwealth Government to bring to bear on some of the issues. Other representatives of the steering committee come from obviously, DVA and the Department of Defence and DEWR, DEEWR, rather. So the membership of the committee, I guess, reflects the need for expertise across the whole government business in a range of areas, and I think that's the reason why they've been chosen to join the steering committee.

MR R. BROWN: One of the other things that we've raised is the – which a lot of other people have raised – is offsetting, and there's three types of offsetting that applies under the arrangements, and that's the, obviously the VEA and SRCA. But then you've got the current one which is SRCA/MRCA, where the compensation of offsetting applies to non-related injuries, whereas under the VEA it's the same condition which is offset. Under the MRCA/SRCA, that's regardless of whether it's related it's the same, and now there's also the VEA/SRCA one in regards to TPI, which means that if you're a TPI it doesn't matter whether that condition is related or not it's going to be offset.

Now, if these recommendations come across that's going to be scrapped..... I suppose this goes with a lot of other things. What changes are made, how will they be applied

in retrospectivity, and the same for permanent impairment if the system is changed so that there's one payment regardless of overseas or peacetime. What – will we be looking at any retrospectivity for people who already have applied, in the future?

MR BAYLES: That's a very difficult question, Ray. It is – I mean, at the end of the day the committee will make recommendations to Government and it will be up to Government about whether or not changes will be put into Parliament which would have retrospective effect if passed, and I guess it would be up to Parliament to consider the effect of those changes that are put forward. It is very early days in the review and the committee have yet to form any views about some of these issues, so it is a difficult question to answer, Ray.

At this stage we haven't – the committee hasn't formed views and it will obviously write a report to Government and the Government will then need to consider what recommendations it accepts or not accepts, and how they will be implemented, so it is a difficult question to answer at this point, Ray. I can't really give you an answer.

It depends on what is recommended and what Government decides to accept out of the steering committee report. We are hoping to report by the end of March 2010, if we can meet that deadline, so that is all I can say at this stage, Ray. I can't answer your question fully, I'm afraid.

MR R. BROWN: Just one more before you move on to Lawrie, I have got a question regarding previous compensation. Life insurance, there was talk recently, it was in the news as well, about individuals taking out life insurance with – before

being deployed. I take it that life insurance that is taken up by individuals doesn't come into play in regard to military compensation in any way, shape or form, so there's no offsetting for the same condition.

MR BAYLES: No. Okay. I will answer the question that has been put here. There is no offsetting of life insurance against military compensation. The issue that has been raised with us is about the difficulties that members of the ADF have had with insurance policies, again insurance policies which will cover them when they go on deployment. As most of you would be aware, life insurance policies have exclusions and one of the common exclusions is if you go to war. Now, there have been some life insurance policies which have been available to members of the ADF which don't have that exclusion for, you know, being injured or killed in a war situation.

Now, those life insurance policies are, I guess, at risk, because of the significant cost pay outs that those life insurance policies have had to make in recent times, and the question is, depending on whether or not that will be sustainable, as to life insurance policies, will be sustainable in the long run, and if not whether the Government needs to do anything itself to intervene in that regard, so that is a question that is before the committee, but certainly the answer to your question, Ray, is that life insurance policy pay outs do not affect military compensation benefits.

MR HEATH: Lawrie Heath, ISPA also. I have made a bit of a focus of looking at the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Group - that that group uses, and I was under the impression, because back in the 12 months before the election and just after the election, I had a number of meetings with the Minister, who is now the Minister, wasn't then, and he certainly gave me the impression that your focus would be on the – what I call, the whole of the military compensation system, which covers both the veterans and also the peace time service, but from your introduction, Neil, it

appears that legislation such as 1930 Act and the 1971 Act, and to a certain extent the 1988 Act, will not be covered. Is that right?

MR SUTHERLAND: What is generally or mostly excluded from this review, is, in fact, the VEA. The review is focusing on the MCRA, the new Act, but we are looking at anomalies or problems that have arisen in the new Act in relation to the

1930, the 1971 and the 1988 Act. We are not going back and reviewing some of the fundamental issues about the 1930 Act or the '71 Act, the question of lump sums, things like that, but we are looking at impacts of those Acts today, and transitional provisions and how they work, but the focus is looking at where we are today and what is happening with the impact of those Acts and the transition from those Acts to the new scheme. We are not going to reopen some of the very old, you know, problems of the 1971 Act, the unavailability of compensation for back injuries.

That's not going to be reopened.

MR HEATH: No, no, no.

MR SUTHERLAND: That's the old Act.

MR HEATH: I agree with that. But you do have in – is this working? You do have in some of your terms of reference that you would be looking at the levels of support and perhaps compensation for peace time ex-servicemen, so how do you equate that back to people who have had a claim under the 1930 Act and the 1971 Act, and who are under those levels of support that have been dictated by those Acts? Does that mean from what I hear you saying, that perhaps you may be looking at that and saying those levels aren't quite high enough?

MR SUTHERLAND: Our focus in the terms of reference is on anomalies that have arisen from the old Act. We are not here to review levels of benefit under the old Act or those sorts of issues. They are not part of our terms of reference that I can see. But we are certainly looking at anomalies.

MR HEATH: Yes. So by anomaly you mean these unintended differences that's mentioned in the Act. Is that another - - -

MR SUTHERLAND: That's one element, yes.

MR HEATH: Is that another term for it?

MR SUTHERLAND: Yes. That's certainly a part of the anomaly problem.

MR HEATH: Yes. So in reality though, you really aren't looking at perhaps removing the 1930, 1971 Act, 1988 Act, and placing everyone under the 2004 Act?

MR SUTHERLAND: It's been discussed - - -

MR BAYLES: It's been discussed within the steering committee. It is a very difficult issue and it has been raised in a number of the submissions, so the review will have a look at that question about whether that is feasible or not feasible, so in a sense, that is being considered because it has been raised in a number of the submissions, and it is a topic that will be looked at, but it is a question of whether or not that sort of change is appropriate and whether it is feasible or not.

MR HEATH: Well, that is encouraging that you are going to have a good look at that, but I would be very surprised if the government would allow that to happen because there are a lot of ramifications coming from that as you – I don't even have to go into what they are, but I think also that some of the policies, guidelines and instructions under which MCRCG – sorry, MRCS, I've got to – it used to be MRCS – are told to work under in regard to these pieces of legislation. They have been found at times by solicitors that the instruction wasn't correct or legal or appropriate for the legislation and the type of service that military people have.

I have been told that some of those have been corrected, so I think that if you don't do a full review and perhaps remove those Acts, then a full review should be done of the policy guideline instructions under which the assessing officers have to work when they assess claims under each of those Acts. Would you have a comment on that, please?

MR BAYLES: The review is a review of legislation and policies that are in that legislation. To the extent that we will look at policies, it will depend on the nature of those policies and whether or not they are consistent or not, consistent with legislation. Our primary focus is, of course, on the legislation and there may be some policies which have been issued, which are issued to support the legislation and to provide guidance to decision makers. We may look at those if we think – if it raised with us that those policies are not consistent with the legislation.

MR HEATH: There's just a couple that I'd like to highlight, if I could. There are many, but there are a couple I'd like to highlight. Under this particular legislation it talks about onus of proof and I have had many different interpretations of what that means from a legal point of view, from assessing officers. The Act doesn't actually say that the claimant has an onus of proof, and yet a lot of the assessing officers consider that that person does, so that needs to be looked at. The other one is the actual standard of proof, which we talk about as on the balance of probabilities.

I have spoken to a number of assessing officers throughout the whole of Australia in different offices in DVA, and there doesn't seem to be any consistent interpretation as to exactly what that means. Some of them have a lot of different ideas of what that means, and, of course, that can cause a lot of problems in regard to a – we could call a consistent and efficient measuring tool for assessing officers to be able to make consistent decisions wherever that claim comes in. So that's two areas that I would ask respectfully for you people to have a good look at.

The other one is with doctor's medical opinions, and we are still talking under the 1930 Act, 1971 Act and 1988 Act,

peacetime service. I, in my experience as a – I've had a background of being a pensions officer and an advocate – a lot of the assessing officers will say, "Right, we've got to get an opinion off the relevant specialist for whatever the claim is", and that assessing officer will put together a summary of the claim that is sent to that specialist.

Now, none of these assessing officers are medically qualified, and I believe now, these days, you can correct me if I am wrong, and I don't think any of them have had any military service exposure, so we have found in the past that this report, that summary that is sent of the claim to the specialists, it has been found that it doesn't actually contain all the relevant information that should be contained in there for the doctor to make an opinion on the real issues that are within the claim.

That's been a contention now for quite a while when we've had to debate those sorts of issues about the medical opinion. The other part of that is too, we should ask the question should doctors' reports be supported – or his opinion, should it be supported in some way to support what he is actually saying, so there is some sort of weight to be given to that particular report, and a lot of the ones I've seen, there is no support for that opinion that the doctor has come up with, you know, whether it be research that has been done on the subject, or something along those lines, I have seen on a number of occasions a doctor's report has come in and it has about six lines in it, and the last line says, "In my opinion this injury is not consistent with military service."

And that is the end of it. There might be three lines, a couple of paragraphs, very short paragraphs, so I ask the question, if I have to write a statement about something as a lay person, I have to support that with some sort of support. Why don't our doctors have to? Particularly the doctors that MR CG – got it right that time – are the chosen doctors of MR CG and a lot of assessing officers will just seek their unsupported opinion which is not really right, is it? I mean - - -

MR BAYLES: These are operational issues which are covered by our terms of reference. We are to look at the operational performance of the scheme and the administration of the scheme by the Department. So yes – thank you for raising those issues. They are covered by the terms of reference. Yes.

MR HEATH: Yes. This is the last one. I have also noted in my experience that at times there is some – there's quite a bit of conflict between these compensation acts that we're talking about today, and other Commonwealth legislation. I will just give you a couple of examples. If a – an ex-soldier, for example, is on incapacity payments you can imagine that after a while it becomes 75 per cent of that – of his income when he was a soldier. And so if – even if his family – his spouse, perhaps children find it very difficult to live on that – so the spouse decides she will have to go to Centrelink to see if she can get some additional support.

In a lot of cases – well, nearly all cases what happens is that when the Centrelink does an assessment on that application, the Centrelink people assess his income and his income is assessed on so many – say if I'm wrong - on every dollar that he earns.

Whereas if that particular person was actually say working for a brickie, as a brickie's labourer and he was actually getting the same income, his income – because they consider it as normal income under the Social Security Act, it would be assessed as so many cents in the dollar. Say, for example he – the latest thing is 40 cents in the dollar. I'm not positive about that. So it's – in a lot of cases what happens is Centrelink then says – no, you're within your income assessment and you're earning too much money.

So that's an example of some – of a conflict between various government legislations. So one of the ones that I would like you to look at.

MR SUTHERLAND: That's a very important point you have made. It's – of course it's one that is raised by the Social Security Act, not by - - -

MR HEATH: That's right.

MR SUTHERLAND: - - - the Military Compensation schemes - - -

MR HEATH: Yes.

MR SUTHERLAND: - - - and it applies universally in Australia to workers compensation, whether military or civilian - - -

MR HEATH: Exactly.

MR SUTHERLAND: - - - private or government.

MR HEATH: Agreed.

MR SUTHERLAND: I would strongly suggest that you make representations to the Government about the unfairness of that system generally. It's a little bit outside our capacity to say that's unfair, because it's actually a much broader social policy of the Commonwealth Government, but one, I would agreed, is unfair. But you, you know, - the community needs to point to that unfairness

MR HEATH: Yes.

MR SUTHERLAND: - - - I don't think we can address it.

MR HEATH: I have made representation about that, but being one person it doesn't go over very well.

MR SUTHERLAND: The voice has got to be very wide.

MR HEATH: Yes. Now, well, you ask Alan Griffin how wide my voice has been. But surely, is it possible for this committee to make a recommendation, and I think coming from a committee such as – as important as yours, that Alan would take that up to the various departments that are responsible for those particular pieces of legislation to have a look at that. Is that a possibility to come out of your committee?

MR SUTHERLAND: It's almost out of scope.

MR L. BROWN: Yes. Unfortunately it's the Social Security Act.

MR HEATH: Yes.

MR L. BROWN: And you're talking about comp. recovery under the Social Security Act, which is – it's not within the remit of this review for us to comment on policy under the Social Security Act.

MR SUTHERLAND: Of course.

MR R. BROWN: Just in regard to the insurance. I think it's

an important area because a lot of people perceive the compensation system to be inadequate, especially when you are considering widow or widower that has to raise family on their own or, in such as my case severe injury where your income and support is relatively restricted and that basically you're indexed – well, by any overtime and all that. But this is probably highlighted by the fact that – I think a couple of years ago the SAS Trust Fund was given 10 million dollars by the Government, now – to assist the families of those injured or killed. When questioned, the Government said – no, it's not an admission that the Military Compensation Scheme is inadequate. As far as I'm concerned for me it is an issue, and it is inadequate and that people are looking into other areas to prop up payments to a mortgage, child education, child medical, and then that's why I think a lot of them would like to see something in that area – not so much so they can live, you know, in millionaire's row, but so they can get their children through medical and educational systems.

MS HODGKISSON: Certainly. My name is Katrina Hodgkisson, I'm a solicitor with the firm of Wyatt Attorneys who manage – I'm a solicitor with carriage of the military compensation arm of our firm. There's a number of things. I mean, we've made some submissions and a lot of what we've addressed in our submissions have been raised by other people today. A few things that I just wanted to clarify – and it's been raised a little bit – as to the medicine that's considered when these claims are progressed. A common theme that I have experienced difficulties within the department is the reliance upon medical reports of departmental medical advisers, people who have – are presumed to do reports on the papers.

We're not advised – well, it's not clear from – firstly, their reports are usually not provided with the determination, which makes advising clients, and clients who are self-represented, it makes it very difficult for them to understand the evidentiary basis on which their claim has been accepted or denied. But probably the bigger issue is these people never see the client, never actually examine the client, and do a report on the papers. And in some circumstances that's appropriate but I've seen other – I've certainly had experience with matters where departmental medical advisers have refused a claim and it's ended up all the way in the AAT, it's hit particular specialist medical evidence and the specialists will come back and say, well, that departmental medical advisor's opinion is so far removed from what clinical and evidence-based medicine suggests as to, you know, a causation of a condition.

And that's an issue, I think, in relation to how claims are run, how claims are determined on liability, that I think it's a bit of an issue that, you know, some people don't have an opportunity to address that. I mean, all these sorts of things can be –

I've requested numerous of these reports under the Freedom of Information provisions under the MRCA and when you get the report they're – reports are often, you know, two or three lines essentially and it's on that basis that a delegate refuses a claim for liability. And in some circumstances I think that's really prejudicial to a claim. Another major issue that I see that I think is important for the steering committee to consider is the length of time

that it takes the department to administer the claims.

It's a complaint that I hear all day every day from my clients and that I experience day in, day out myself; that the department doesn't seem to be accountable in terms of the time they take to determine the claim, from when the claim was lodged to liability to permanent impairment, if it's appropriate. I've had a matter that, you know, took nearly two years to determine on liability alone for a discharged member.

So that member was without provision of medical treatment. And, I mean, this is – as much as I don't want to talk about individual circumstances, it's quite a recurring theme and I think there needs to be some provision – I think it's important that the committee considers some provision that there's, I don't know, certain timeframes perhaps to be suggested as to, you know, when is reasonable for claim – six, eight weeks, 12 weeks – from when the claim is lodged to when a decision on liability ought to be made.

Because to have these matters hanging over for in excess of – you know, almost two years is just – it certainly doesn't give the community a very positive outlook as to the management of these claims by DVA. The other issue that I wanted to address quickly is there seems to be quite a long of inconsistency procedurally between the offices of DVA throughout Australia. New South Wales administers everything very different to Brisbane, to Western Australia, to South Australia and it's really difficult. Somebody else mentioned before having things be consistent in terms of what may be accepted or may not be accepted throughout; you know, for one person in Western Australia may have a condition accepted and a person in similar circumstances in Sydney may not, for example. And that's something that is really – it's a really quite significant procedural unfairness to claimants that I think needs to be addressed.

MR SUTHERLAND: Could I just ask, what's your experience – your personal experience or your firm's experience – in the comparison between different state jurisdictions? Do you practise across other than New South Wales?

MS HODGKISSON: Yes, absolutely, we've got clients that are spread – the vast majority of our work is Sydney, Brisbane but we've got a lot of work in Western Australia, a lot of work in the Northern Territory, Townsville area, all operating. I mean, simple things like needs assessments, for example, there seem to be very different guidelines as to the – you know, how needs assessments are conducted when you're looking at a claimant who's represented in Sydney and Brisbane to that which I've been advised in Victoria, for example. There's different regulations as to what correspondence is sent directly to a claimant and what correspondence is sent to their representative, and that doesn't seem to be across the board and I think it ought to be.

MR SUTHERLAND: Have you made submissions in detail, including some of this?

MS HODGKISSON: Yes. Yes, I have.

MR SUTHERLAND: Good, so it's on the table.

MS HODGKISSON: Yes.

MR SUTHERLAND: Can we just come just come back to your second point, the length of the claim administration? Have you tried ombudsmen in many of these?

MS HODGKISSON: Yes, we – have I? No, I may not have had an ombudsman in that one, no.

MR SUTHERLAND: Okay.

MR BAYLES: Could I just ask you a question about - you said if a claim isn't determined within a set period of time there should be some – a consequence of that?

MS HODGKISSON: Not necessarily a consequence.

MR BAYLES: Just a time?

MS HODGKISSON: I just think there ought to be a timeline.

MR BAYLES: Okay.

MS HODGKISSON: I know I don't practise a great deal within the New South Wales state-based workers compensation, but my understanding of that scheme is that – you know, if a claim isn't determined within a particular timeframe is gets referred to the Workers Compensation Commission.

MR BAYLES: Okay.

MS HODGKISSON: And there doesn't seem to be any similar – I think something like could be beneficial. There doesn't seem to be any similar sort of scheme and sort of accountability, you know? If a delegate says to you, "This is what I'm going to do by" – whatever particular time and that thing is not done, there's nothing that you can really – there's not a great deal of scope where you can say, "Look, you haven't done this, therefore we're going to refer you to" – you know, "these people."

MR BAYLES: Okay. That's what I was trying to clarify. Thank you for that.

Thank you.

MS HODGKISSON: I think that's about all.

MR SUTHERLAND: If I could just comment, the three Commonwealth schemes, the MRCA scheme, the SRCA scheme and preceding schemes, don't have these timelines in them.

MS HODGKISSON: No.

MR SUTHERLAND: The interesting thing in the Commonwealth area is of course the Seacare scheme, which is a Commonwealth scheme, does actually have timelines, which then deems a refusal, you know, and it immediately goes to recon if the decision isn't made within a particular time. Is that the sort of thing you have in mind?

MS HODGKISSON: I think so because at least - it enables the claim to keep moving, rather than have it be really stagnant for such a significant period of time. I think something like that could be beneficial, absolutely. And, I mean, I understand to a certain extent – and certainly what a number of delegates have told me – it's a staffing issue, it's a departmental resource issue, which I appreciate. But to a certain extent, that doesn't help the claimants a great deal and when you're dealing in beneficial legislation, I think that's where it really ought to aim.

MR BAYLES: Thank you. Thanks indeed. Okay, any last calls for people who haven't spoken who desperately wish to speak? None? Okay, well, Ray Brown, I know you would

like to speak again so I'll give you the microphone.

MR R. BROWN: Again, thank you for the opportunity. I would just like to touch on a couple of things - one of the ones that in our submission wasn't a recommendation but it was in there - and that's the part "deemed able to earn," which is used quite a lot in incapacity payment decisions. And there seems to be a standard "deemed able to earn 20 hours a week." Now, this seems to be happening a lot and I don't think what's taken into consideration, as opposed "deem able to earn," is "actual able to earn." Because a lot of people being injured now at varying levels are going to be on restricted work regime, if they do get work, and, as we know, a lot of companies have put people off.

Now, anybody could be deemed able to work 30 hours a week. I mean, there can be exceptional adjustments to a workplace to allow someone to work 30 hours a week.

But are they actually able to work 30 hours a week, is the other thing. Now, a lot of things aren't taken into consideration, I don't believe, such as medication, level of impairment, back injuries, transportation issues, travel – how far they've got to go – and even the fact that, you know, the alternative company don't give employment in that area. Now, I think that area needs to be looked at in regards to the administration of incapacity payment, because it does seem to be a cost-saving issue, whereas a delegate can just go to the SRCA, "deemed able to earn," yes, might be assessed 20 hours, and away they go; and in fact they may only be able to work 15 hours.

I think a lot more focus should be on that particular case where incapacity payments are being made or determined. The other thing I wanted to raise, which was touched on earlier, about allowances for those that fought overseas, and I wanted to make this point – which I just remembered before we even touched on it – that I read in Hansard in regard to a member who has been killed in operational service, whose allowances and everything ceased; yet when a member is injured or wounded and returns to Australia, all these benefits and allowances continue until the day he's – a year of return back to Australia. And this includes the Defence housing home loan stuff as well. Now, I think that that should be applied to those who are unfortunately killed in service overseas as well. And I'm not sure if it is the – I learned it here but I think I've learned that regardless of whether it's because of wars or death, that that particular allowances, or allowances, continues until that unit that the member belonged to returns.

And that would - I think will help the unfortunate people such as the young lady here, help financially for a lot longer as they come to terms with what's happened if they need a leg up with the financial situation, which also applies to people who put in claims. There's a thing that says that "financial hardship get priority."

Unfortunately, I don't see that happening that much in the administration and there are a lot of people who are struggling because all of a sudden they're restricted on their income. And my first piece of advice nowadays is to say, "Go to Centrelink, get your income support there because it will be quicker than trying to get it through the MCRS in that way."

Because a lot of the times you ring up to find out what's going on and the delegate is on leave or isn't in that day or is elsewhere. And this is also made difficult when the person has got a review for reconsideration being done because their files go interstate. So they've lost those files in their hometown and people get told, "Well, we can't do anything because your files are in Canberra and you're going through a review." So there's I think an administrative problem now in the assessment and reconsiderations, especially when it comes to staff cuts in certain areas, such as Tasmania or closed down in Canberra.

I think that there hasn't really probably been much of a change in the way when I went through the process in 1994 to what appears to be still happening now in regard to a lot of administration confusion between DVA, MCRS and Defence.

And I think that, you know, one person is one person too much and I don't know how we're going to coordinate all these people who are trying, I believe, to do the right thing by those injured or the family of those killed. The main criticism I suppose I could say is they run a consultative forum attending in Canberra three times a year over the

last few years and, having there, I suppose met and discussed these things with department heads at the national – you know, the veterans forums and, you know, the roundtable, ESO forums, is that these problems aren't new.

These problems have been raised for years and years and years and unfortunately they just keep getting discussed, a paper written, and then re-raised two years later or a year later with exactly the same problem. And whilst this is a great opportunity for submissions, these submissions are pretty much three years old and yet they haven't been acted upon.

And, you know, when you talk about offsetting, I mean, that was reviewed and re-raised years and years ago. So whilst I can understand this review being a big long engagement, the feeling that "will changes occur?" – I know recommendations will occur but will changes occur or will we still be fighting in the next five to 10 years? There's a real big question mark there a lot of us have in the ex-service community. So I'd just like to finish off and hopefully there will be changes and not more rhetoric.

Letters

Not Happy

27th August 2009

Dear Mr President,

Just received the latest Journal (Vol 13 No2), and noticed in your article (Behind the President's Desk) that members are invited to contribute any items of interest or information that may assist others in their area or State. I also assume this means nationally as well.

As Pauline Hanson once said to somebody in the media when asked a question or read an article she did not understand, "Please Explain".

Could you "please explain" to our members in South Australia why our articles and photographs of the South Australian Peacetime Memorial were not included in this Journal, nor mentioned in any of the past Journals?

Our efforts in South Australia (on behalf of ISPA), have largely been ignored by the National Executive. I also believe all our ISPA members are unaware of our achievements in this State, mainly because it has not being recognised in the Journal.

If this association is to expand into other States and prosper into the future, then one would expect to be recognised when something great is achieved, especially when I am about to approach the SA Government for a grant for the ISPA Memorial in Canberra, which I am now placing on hold.

Why has South Australia members and their memorial been ignored by the National Executive? Do we in fact exist and why do you not wish all ISPA members not to know about our Peacetime Memorial? It's never been mentioned to anybody, as far as I know, why?

I note our ISPA National Vice President is so excited about the outstanding news that the ADF Peacetime Service

Memorial will be at Russell Offices in Canberra, but still no mention of the South Australian Memorial. I believe our members in SA expect an explanation by you and the executives of this association.

If a satisfactory explanation is not forthcoming then we in SA may consider its not worthwhile remaining with the ISPA.

Yours Sincerely

Jeff Crase

Response

G'day Jeff,

I apologise unreservedly. It was solely my fault. I had your items but totally forgot. I make no excuses other than just forgetting. I understand the importance of highlighting achievements of members such as yourself and those in SA as well as other States. You and those in SA have a right to be angry and upset.

I promise to publish the email you have sent in the summer journal with this reply. I also promise to dedicate 2 pages to SA happenings each edition. How you utilize those 2 pages is up to you.

Again, I solely accept responsibility as my stuff up and apologise and will ensure the SA memorial and due acknowledgements are published.

Yours sincerely

Ray Brown

National President

In Remembrance

Hi my name is PODM John Mitchell R.A.N. R54153, having served from 1958 - 1970. I was at the time of Surgeon Lt Cmdr John McNulty's death at HMAS Tarangau his Dental Assistant. John McNulty was a great bloke and family

Prime Ministerial Advisory Council on Ex-Service

Matters

man and friend despite our differences in rank. He suffered a massive coronary while trudging up the hill towards the dental clinic one morning, (the day and date escapes my memory), and was pronounced dead on arrival at the hospital. I had the sad task of assisting the POSBA with the preparation of his body for burial, and he was subsequently given a Naval Burial and his body interned in the cemetery at Lorengau, Manus Island. His younger sister also attended the service along with his wife and two young children at that ceremony. I have often wondered whether or not the John McNulty's family members left John's mortal remains at Lorengau or whether his remains were eventually brought back to Queensland. I hope this will fill in the missing information concerning a great bloke.

Sincerely John Mitchell

(Ed- 19.08.81 Sergeant Brian Wilson RAAF Williamtown NSW Killed in Iroquois crash).

To Whom It May Concern

The death and/or serious injury of any service member during training has always moved me as I has spent 20 years with the commando regiment and 30 years in customs border operations. I undoubtedly viewed the 'In Remembrance' listing 1961 – 1990 and saw many very familiar names, as I spent many years 69-75 training with the SASR personnel.

However I did note a number missing in this period, particularly those who served in the CFM/ARes – the names I have forgotten, but I am aware of two killed at 1 Commando (NSW), and I think one was killed at 2 Commando (Victoria). I wish I could help with more information.

If you are interested, you may wish to make enquiries with the Commando Association both in Victoria and NSW – I am not a member

I also served with a Ray Brown SASR & Commando.

Frank Malkoun

In Search Of

Hi, I hope you do not mind me contacting you, it is concerning Brian Wilson.

We have been trying to trace him for my mother for nearly two years now. We live in the UK and in 1948 a four year old boy was taken from his family in Birmingham, as he was illegitimate and they were poor, and sent to Australia to start a new life. He was sent on the SS Ormonde to Fairbridge Farm School, Molong .He was my mother's half brother.

She is now 82 and in poor health and dearly wants him to know that he was loved but they had no choice in what happened. If this is the Brian Wilson, then we may now stop looking, or maybe he had a family. We were wondering if someone there knew him and a little of his history. We saw you In the Remembrance page online.

Thanking you,

Merryl and Peter Englefield

Monmouth

South Wales

peter@acorn2oak.demon.co.uk

As we know, an election promise of the 2007 Rudd government was to establish a council of ex-service people to advise the government on ex-service issues.

I, as were a great many in the ex-service community under the impression that the establishment of the PMAC would result in more transparency, representation and most importantly feedback in the councils representation to government.

Anyone with a computer and access to <http://minister.dva.gov.au/PMAC/index.htm> could be forgiven for being disappointed for the lack of content, especially when it comes to the summaries of meetings.

There are 4 summaries posted of which the latest meeting posted is 19th April 2009. It is interesting to note that there have been 2 more meetings since 19th April 2009.

Meeting 1 Summary

New veterans council holds first meeting at Parliament House

The fourteen members of the newly established Prime Ministerial Advisory Council on Ex-Service Matters have met for the first time.

During the meeting, conducted on October 9 and 10 in Canberra, the Council have confirmed its terms of reference, investigated some of the current consultative arrangements for the veterans community and began considering some of the major issues facing the portfolio.

The Council also met with the Prime Minister, who said that the establishment of the advisory body was an important achievement for the Government and that he looked forward to receiving its advice.

The Chair of the Council, Dr Allan Hawke, said he was pleased by the progress of the first meeting.

"We have decided how the Council will work and report to the Government.

Meeting 2 Summary

The Prime Ministerial Advisory Council met via teleconference on 13 January 2009 for further deliberations on the proposed new Consultation Framework of the Department of Veterans' Affairs. A report of the meeting including the Council's recommendations of the framework has been provided to the Minister for his consideration.

The outcome of meeting 2 was the media release of 9th April 2009 announcement of new consultative forums to be established. These new forums have been established and are:

Ex-Service Organisation (ESO) Round Table

The new ESO Round Table will be supported by four smaller forums that focus on specific policy areas:

- **The Operational Working Party** – to focus on service delivery performance and issues.

• **The National Health, Aged and Community Care Forum** – to advise on current and future health and aged care needs of veterans and war widow/ers.

• **The Current and Former Members of the ADF Emerging Issues Forum** – to provide a mechanism for consultation about issues affecting younger and recently discharged members and their families.

• **The National Mental Health Forum** – to enable broad consultation on mental health policy and issues, including raising awareness of mental health and the provision of early intervention and treatment programs.

More on the new forums later.

Meeting 3 Summary

The Prime Ministerial Advisory Council on Ex-Service Matters met on 19 and 20 March 2009 for the third time since the formation of the Council in October last year.

The Council, Chaired by Dr Allan Hawke, comprises 14 members with broad experience across the service and ex-service communities who serve in an honorary capacity.

The Minister noted the Council's achievements included building the foundation of the Council, providing valuable feedback to Professor Dunt for his ADF Mental health review and the Study of Suicide in the Ex-service Community and debating and providing constructive ideas on the new structure to consult the veteran and ex-service community on matters affecting them.

During the two-day meeting, the Council consulted further with the Minister on the Department's new framework for consultation with the ex-service community.

The Council extended its consideration of mental health issues following a presentation on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder by the Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health and the Departments of Defence and Veterans' Affairs. The Council provided views on the operation of preventative and treatment programs provided to ADF members both pre and post deployment as well as programs provided to those diagnosed with PTSD.

The Council also commenced its consideration of the recommendations of the Clarke Review not acted on by the previous Government following the closure of public submissions in December last year in preparation of providing advice to Government.

The Council has arrived at a protocol for receipt of submissions from individuals and ex-service organisations. Details of this submission process are now on the Council internet site below.

The Council will meet again in July.

Meeting 4 Summary

The Prime Ministerial Advisory Council on Ex-Service Matters (PMAC) met on 29 April 2009 via video conference facilities.

The focus of the meeting was the Independent Study into Suicide in the Ex-service Community undertaken by Professor David Dunt.

Professor Dunt provided members with a short presentation on some of the major findings of the Suicide Study and answered questions from members.

The Minister stated that of the 21 recommendations contained in the report, the Government had accepted 20 of these in full and the remaining one recommendation was accepted in principle.

The Minister informed members that the Government had committed \$9.5 million over four years to fund the recommendations.

The Minister indicated that the response to the study was a work in progress and that while the recommendations had been accepted, implementation issues for some recommendations would require some teasing out.

The Minister agreed that PMAC members would be able to play a valuable role in raising and discussing issues and solutions in relation to the implementation of the recommendations.

The Minister spoke briefly about several of the recommendations, focussing in particular on recommendation 8.1 relating to pension officers and advocates. He acknowledged that the two tier system proposed by Professor Dunt was one approach and he would be keen to consult with the ex-service community to identify other possible models and identify the best solution. The Minister stressed that this will be one of the major issues for the Veterans' Affairs portfolio in the coming year.

Since the 29th April 2009 the PMAC has met at least 2 more times yet neither meeting summaries are posted on the PMAC website. The ISPA did publish a summary of the 2nd & 3rd July 2009 meeting which was presented to the Victorian ESO RSL Younger Veterans Forum by council member Anne Pahl. What information has been released by other PMAC members? So much for transparency and feedback to all the ex-service community.

As for post 2-3 July meeting issue discussions and summaries, who knows when we'll see them and more importantly to what details will we be privy to.

Can I refer an issue to the Council?

The Council has been established to consider and advise the Prime Minister and Government on strategic and complex matters. It is not the role of the Council or individual members to become involved in, or advocate on behalf of, individual cases.

If you would like to refer an issue to the Council for possible consideration please use the [template](#).

1. You can print, complete and sign the template OR complete the template electronically, save, print and sign the template.

2. You may fax the completed template to (02) 6289 6173 OR scan and email OR post it to the PMAC Secretariat at the addresses below.

3. All submissions received by the PMAC Secretariat will be acknowledged.

Contact

Email: PMCouncil@dva.gov.au

Postal:

PMAC Secretariat PO Box 21 WODEN ACT 2606

Please note: the Secretariat is unable to disclose the personal contact details of Council members due to privacy reasons.



ISPA MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL APPLICATION

Surname: _____ Given: _____

Address: _____ City: _____

State: _____ Postcode: _____ Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Occupation: _____
(If retired, state occupation prior to retirement, e.g. retired carpenter)

Name/s of other Ex Service Organisations membership is held with (e.g. RSL, TPI Assn): _____

BRANCH OF SERVICE

(Please circle) Navy Army Air force ARes CMF

Service Number: _____ Rank at Discharge: _____ Unit/Corp: _____

Date of Enlistment: _____ Type of Discharge: _____

Date of Discharge: _____ Date of Injury/Illness: _____

Type of Injury/Illness: _____

Do you seek claim assistance? Initial claim. Reconsideration. Administrative Appeals Tribunal.
=====

I, Mr, Mrs, Ms _____ Do Hereby Authorise ISPA to make any representation for and on my behalf.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

(ISPA Code of confidentiality provides that ALL INFORMATION provided by Members shall be held in the strictest of confidence and trust).
=====

Please find attached/enclosed cheque/money order for the amount of \$_____ being

(1) Joining Fee \$5.00 (2) Membership Fee \$15.00 annual (3) Lapel Badge \$8.00 (4) Renewal \$15.00

(Please circle the above that is applicable)

Money order or cheque made payable to ISPA:
ISPA
PO Box 1164
ST Marys NSW 2760

Direct Deposit
Injured Services Persons Assn
BSB: 062250
Acc: 10033874



Australian Government
VVCS – Veterans and Veterans Families
Counselling Service

Supporting Australia’s veterans, peacekeepers and their families

VVCS provides counselling and group programs to veterans, peacekeepers, partners, widows, sons and daughters and eligible ADF personnel. VVCS is a specialised, free and confidential Australia-wide service.

VVCS can provide you with:

- individual, couple and family counselling
- case management services
- after-hours crisis telephone counselling service via Veterans Line
- group programs for common mental health issues (eg. Anxiety, depression, sleep & anger)
- psycho-educational programs for couples, including a residential lifestyle management program
- health promotion programs including Heart Health – a 52 week supervised exercise and health education program offered in group and correspondence formats
- Stepping Out, a 2-day 'transition' program for ADF members and their partners preparing to leave the military
- Changing the Mix, a self-paced alcohol reduction correspondence program
- Operation Life Workshops
- information, education and self-help resources
- referral to other services

We can help you work through issues such as stress, relationships, family problems and other lifestyle issues as well as emotional or psychological issues associated with your military service.

If you need support, would like more information about us or if you know someone who does, please give us a call or visit our website.

1800 011 046*

www.dva.gov.au/health/vvcs

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



Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service
 A service founded by Vietnam veterans

hmaC094565



Safety Skill Service
Maintenance Repair Overhaul

an authorized
Rolls-Royce
 maintenance center

Asia Pacific Aerospace specialises in the maintenance, repair and overhaul of small to medium gas turbine engines.

- APA - Rolls-Royce Authorised Maintenance Centre.
- APA - Approved Maintenance Organisation (AMO) supporting the Australian Defence Force.

FACILITIES

Asia Pacific Aerospace has two computer controlled correlated engine test cells which support a range of engines including:

- Rolls-Royce Model 250 Series Engine
- Honeywell LTS 101 Series Engine
- General Electric T700 Series Engine



750 Macarthur Avenue Central, Pinkenba, Qld 4008, Australia
 PO Box 1355, Eagle Farm, Qld 4009, Australia
 Phone: +61 7 3632 7600 : Fax: +61 7 3632 7677
 Email: info@apaero.com.au

www.apaero.com.au



The most modern, technologically advanced gas turbine engine facilities in Australia.