



THE VIETNAM VETERANS' NEWSLETTER

OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE VIETNAM VETERANS FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIA Inc.

SUPPORTING ALL WHO SERVE & HAVE SERVED

DECEMBER 2017



SEE PAGE 8



Minister refuses access to report on the mismanagement of the Jesse Bird case

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Home Safe



VIETNAM VETERANS' FEDERATION of AUSTRALIA Inc.

Incorporating

Vietnam Veterans Peacekeepers and Peacemakers

Association of Australia (NSW Branch) Inc.

Vietnam Veterans Federation Queensland Branch Inc.

Vietnam Veterans & Veterans Federation ACT Inc.

Vietnam Veterans Federation Victorian Branch Inc.

Vietnam Veterans Federation South Australian Branch Inc.

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**COVER DESIGN
BY
Bob Freshfield**

The Vietnam Veterans Federation gives advice and information on Repatriation matters, and helps with compensation claims and appeals.

We are pleased to help all serving and ex-serving ADF members, veterans of all conflicts as well as war widows/widowers, and families.

There is no obligation for those we help to join our Federation although you would be welcome to do so.

Increasingly we are helping veterans of more recent conflicts and serving members.



Down the Slippery Slope We Go (dignity denied)

In ripping away the dignity of sick and troubled veterans by sending them to Centrelink offices, the government, the Repatriation Commission and DVA are to be condemned

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FROM THE EDITORS DESK

THE MINISTER for Veterans Affairs has announced again: **VETERAN PENSIONS SET TO INCREASE.**

Admittedly, we all fall into the error of saying our Service and Veterans Disability Pensions 'increase' every six months.

But, to those who only have a vague idea of what's going on, calling it an 'increase' can be misleading.

This is because it is not an increase in **REAL** terms. It is simply a catching up.

What is happening is this:

Our Service and Disability Pensions are static whilst the Cost of Living and the average wage steadily rise. Every six months our pensions are allowed to catch up.

So there is no **REAL** increase. In fact, for those six months of waiting, our pensions are falling behind. They are 'decreasing' in **REAL** terms.

So we prefer to refer to the six monthly indexation as the half-yearly 'catch up'. ■

My last part, (4), of the historical piece concludes with this issue and I hope readers enjoyed the journey.

Items for publication in our March 2018 issue should reach me by the first week of February.

Lastly, I just want to wish all members, readers and your families a hearty Christmas wish for prosperity and good health ahead.

Cheers with Beers.

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CLOSE-OFF DATE FOR
MARCH 2018 ISSUE
FEBRUARY 8 2018

ITEMS FOR PUBLICATION

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

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For comments about the articles please write to:

'The National Secretary'.

Email: vvfanatsec@hotmail.com

A prescient Blue Ryan once said:

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

Two stories follow about the Repatriation Commission eroding or attempting to erode long standing Repatriation benefits

The first story

Down the Slippery Slope We Go (dignity denied)



THE government, on Repatriation Commission (RC) advice, has closed down another VAN Office, this time in Canberra, leaving its clients the humiliation of lining up at Centrelink.

This can only mean the government sees war veterans simply as welfare cases rather than those who have rendered the highest and most dangerous public service possible and deserving of special care.

The government is indicating to war

veterans that they do not deserve the dignity of a 'stand-alone' Repatriation service.

Of course, the Repatriation Commission (RC)/DVA is putting a spin on the move, claiming we will be better off at the Centrelink office.

After all, they say, the present Canberra VAN office is not really suitable, not well placed, not widely known, not adequately resourced.

The Centrelink office at Woden, they say, can overcome these inadequacies and is therefore a

great advance for veterans.

They imply RC/DVA are our wonderful benefactors.

But what RC/DVA's spin really means is that they have allowed the existing 'badly placed' VAN office to stand despite its bad geographic location and allowed its resources to remain deficient for years.

Now they want to remedy their past neglect.

So why hasn't RC/DVA identified a new better located separate office and resourced it satisfactorily, retaining that special care and allowing veterans to retain their dignity.

That would be consistent with successive government promises.

Instead RC/DVA is condemning veterans to queue at the Centrelink office, reporting to the Centrelink reception counter before being directed to the veterans' section. No dignity there.

How dare Repatriation Commission/DVA claim to be doing us a favour by sending us to a Centrelink office.

This move is not about veterans' welfare, it is about meanness, about penny pinching, about ripping dignity away from disabled veterans.

The government says it will not amalgamate the Department of Veterans Affairs with Centrelink but it is, in fact, doing just that, gradually.

Here are just some of previous closures:

- Morwell VAN office has been co-located into Centrelink Morwell;

- Ballarat VAN office has been co-located into Centrelink Ballarat;

- Frankston, Gosford, Bairnsdale and Wollongong VAN offices were closed and veterans sent to Centrelink offices.

- Bendigo, Mildura and Warrnambool agency contracts were ended.

- Launceston VVCS closed.

- Newcastle VVCS staff cut.

- Other VVCS offices have been closed and veterans sent to civilian clinics.

How huge, then, is the gap between this government's public declaration that DVA is not in danger of amalgamation with Centrelink when it is actually happening.

How huge is the gap between the government's accolades for Australian war veterans and its real disinterest shown by the semi-hidden incremental demolition of its stand-alone carers?

The answer is that the gap is huge and widening.

In ripping away the dignity of sick and troubled veterans by sending them to Centrelink offices, the government, the Repatriation Commission and DVA are to be condemned. ■

What's their next amalgamation move?

Repatriation Commission/Department of Veterans Affairs

The three person Repatriation Commission advises the Minister for Veterans Affairs on Repatriation policy.

The Department of Veterans Affairs implements that policy when approved by the Minister. The head of the Commission and the head of the Department are the same person.

So one is not independent of the other.

Speaking of one is to speak of both.

The second story

And there's a history of attempted erosion of benefits
Here's an article from a 2003 edition of our magazine

President's Report 1

Plan to Save Money at the Expense of Limbless Veterans

The government's push to save money by taking it from disabled war veterans has reached a new low.

The Department of Veterans Affairs' Canberra Office sent out the instruction; review your policy on supplying artificial limbs to limbless veterans.

The Department's New South Wales Office got the message. That message was; cut services.

So in March this year, New South Wales Department bureaucrats held a meeting with artificial limb suppliers and Health Department officers, proposing that the services to limbless war veterans be reduced. This would mean two things that would save money and no doubt be very pleasing to the government. These two things were:

"Only basic artificial limbs would be issued. Any 'extras' that may improve the limbless veteran's life would not be paid for by the government."

- Limbless war veterans would have the number of artificial limbs issued to them reduced from two to one.
- Only basic artificial limbs would be issued. Any 'extras' that may improve the limbless veteran's life would not be paid for by the government.

The Federation, whilst not being informed by the Department of this meeting, nevertheless heard about it and asked to send a representative.

It was just as well.

Had we not had a representative there, this mean spirited cost cutting operation might well have quietly slipped through unnoticed. By the time it was implemented it would probably have been too late to reverse the decision.

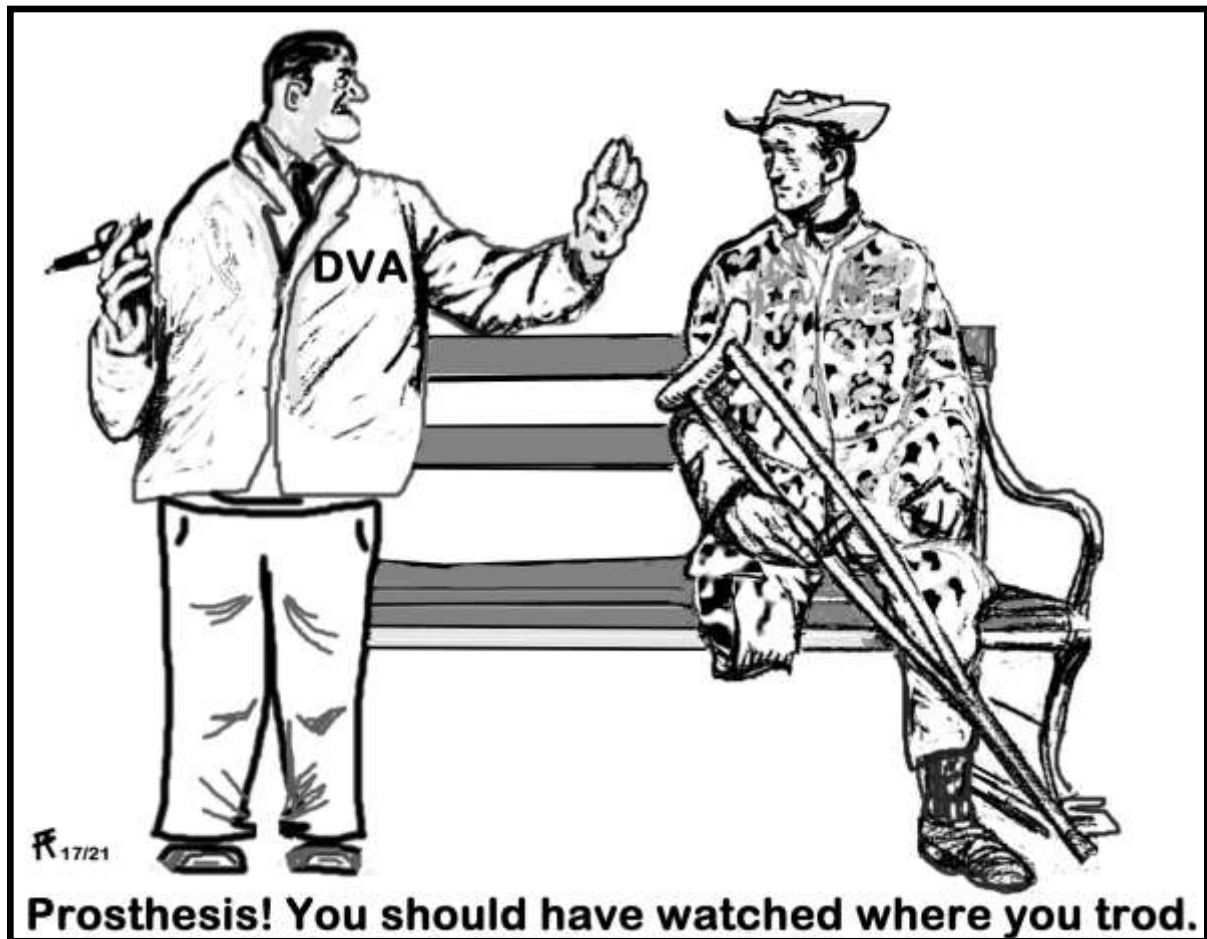
No doubt that was the Department's hope.

Instead, the proposal was aired in the Herald Sun (the article is reproduced below) and the

Minister vetoed the plan.

Article, Page 13, Herald Sun, 28/03/03
RICK WALLACE

A PLAN to deny amputee war veterans a spare artificial limb has been hastily scuttled by the Federal Government.



Veterans Affairs Minister Danna Vale yesterday scrapped a proposal to cut costs by reducing the entitlements of the nation's 1400 limbless veterans.

The plan, drawn up by department bureaucrats, would have robbed veterans of an extra prosthesis, vital when their main limb is being repaired.

It also included a plan to cover only the cost of basic limbs, forcing veterans to dip into their own pockets for advanced, modern limbs, which cost up to \$10,000.

The plan would have applied to existing amputee veterans – mostly landmine victims from the Vietnam War -- and any new casualties in the Gulf.

But the minister dropped the scheme yesterday within hours of the Herald Sun calling for a response.

“The minister has become aware of it and she has instructed the department not to proceed with it,” a spokeswoman said.

Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia chief Tim McCombe said the plan would have left veterans incapacitated when their limbs broke down.

“If you live by yourself, cooking is basically out because how do you carry hot pots on crutches?” he said.

“How do you go shopping, how do you get your limb into the car to be fixed?”

“One of the promises you are made when you go overseas to fight is that the Government will look after you and we are finding more and more that's not the case.”

Labor veterans affairs spokesman Mark Bishop, who raised the issue yesterday, welcomed the minister's decision to scrap the plan.

“Limbless veterans deserve maximum help, not sadistic cutbacks of this kind.” ■

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- We represent former as well as current members of the defence force.
- We represent veterans of all conflicts from World War II to Afghanistan. As well as Peacekeeping services.
- We have many years of experience helping with claims in all the Military Compensation schemes.
- If your initial claim has been unreasonably rejected we have experienced Advocates to prepare and present an appeal to the Veterans Review Board.
- Should an appeal to the Veterans Review Board be unsuccessful we can, for entitled veterans, arrange legal representation and legal aid for Administrative Appeals Tribunal hearings.
- These services are free.
- Neither is there any obligation to join our Federation although you would be welcome to do so.

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

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

MEMBERSHIP

**Belonging
Advocacy
Success**

***Membership is due on 1 January each year.
(July 1 for Queensland members)***

Membership to our organisation empowers a team to achieve much within the veteran community, by assisting veterans with claims and applications on a wide spectrum of government provided avenues of compensation and benefits across 3 Acts of parliament.

Each as an individual is ineffective when lobbying governments for change, or to amend an injustice. Together as an organisation, with a strong membership we are able to, and have done, improve pathways for better treatment of veterans.

We survive as an organisation on the strength of our membership, and even if you have won the battle with Veterans Affairs (DVA), there is always the risk of changes in Government policy which may erode benefits and pensions or changes to eligibility entitlements.

We encourage membership from all who support our objectives, veterans, service and ex-service members, as well as war-widows and their families. You don't have to be a member or ex-member of the Australian Defence Forces (ADF). In most instances, anyone may join our organisation, with few exceptions, so why not enquire today.

It is through our membership subscriptions, fund raising activities and many kind donations from our members, and general public, that we are able to continue supporting our fellow Veterans and Service members in need, and meet our increasing welfare and pension workload.

Should you be able to help with a donation, or leave a bequest in your Will, it would be extremely beneficial and greatly appreciated.

We thank you for your kind support.

NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT

This year saw the release of the Senate inquiry's report into veterans' suicide and the operation of the DVA claims system. This inquiry received 458 submissions and made 24 recommendations for change.

The tragic death of Afghanistan veteran, Jessie Bird, occurred after the committee's report was issued. An ABC report on an inquiry into DVA's handling of his case revealed blunder after blunder by DVA staff. This inquiry made 19 recommendations which DVA Minister, Mr Tehan accepted on behalf of the Government. Progress on implementation will be reviewed in 12 months' time i.e. no later than 24 Oct 2018.

The Senate inquiry identified the systemic problems inherent in having 3 separate acts for Veterans' rehabilitation and compensation. The recommendations arising from the Jessie Bird inquiry revealed that DVA did not comply with legislation or policy in dealing with his claims.

Minister Tehan has promised a report by an independent expert within the next 12 months to report on progress with the implementation of the recommendations from both inquiries that the Government has agreed to.

Two new consultative groups have sprang up this year. The first is the Operational Working group which receives submissions from ESOs and the second is the Legislative Review Committee. Both have had one meeting this year, hence no agreed decisions have been made. Watch this space.

The section 44 saga continues and it is a distraction that we do not need. Our staunch supporter Senator Jackie Lambie may have to resign due to her father being born in Scotland. Regardless of whether she goes or stays I would like to express my appreciation for all she has done for veterans.

If the political pundits are correct we may well have an election early next year. If the Government changes we will need to be proactive in briefing the incoming Minister for Veterans' Affairs.

I thank all the volunteers who have worked so hard, those in executive roles and those who readily do all the mundane tasks. Together you make the Federation an effective organisation.

To all members and their families I wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

To the wives and partners a special vote of thanks for looking after Grumpy!

Yours sincerely

Jim Wain

National President

VVFA

For full details see http://minister.dva.gov.au/media_releases/2017/oct/va144.htm

Comments Corner

The article *Down the Slippery Slope We Go* is an important one. It underlines the Repatriation Commission's mania for cost saving at the expense of veterans' dignity.

So it deserves some comment.

VETERANS don't see themselves as welfare cases. They see the assistance they get as compensation for being damaged fighting Australia's wars.

This was the rationale for setting up a separate Repatriation system with separate offices in the first place; a separate system giving veterans separate care. It is part of the philosophy of beneficial treatment.

So veterans see being sent to a Centrelink queue as a departure from this special treatment; a special treatment earned by giving the greatest public service possible.

It is as though the government is saying: 'We don't think you deserve the respect governments once extended to you.'

Veterans' dignity is dented by that lowering of respect for their service.

In most cases, DVA is not off-loading their responsibility at this stage (though in a few cases it is); they are moving where they execute that responsibility to Centrelink offices from separate office dedicated to veterans and service people.

It is an act of cold cost saving that belies the government's oft announced gratitude and special respect for those who fight Australia's wars.

Whilst the Minister and Shadow Minister give assurances that DVA will not be closed down and veterans administered by Centrelink, those discussions are going on in the bureaucracy, especially in the Department of Finance and Treasury. Many there are not concerned with giving veterans the respect they deserve, they are

simply looking at ways to save money (and get kudos for identifying them). So moving VAN officers from separate locations to existing Centrelink offices would be attractive to them. Closing VVCS offices too, and sending veterans to civilian medical offices would also attract. They push for these savings to be made.

Here's where the Department of Veterans Affairs, *our* department, and the Repatriation Commission, should be resisting such moves.

But they aren't. Indeed, the Repatriation Commission is enthusiastically advocating these closures.

So the closing of a VAN office and moving the DVA officers into a Centrelink office in Canberra, after so many other closures, is a worrying sign. It is a cost cutting decision that threatens to set a new norm. And, of course, if enough VAN offices close and DVA officers move into Centrelink offices, the next logical move pushed by Finance and Treasury would be to train up Centrelink staff to service veterans and do away with DVA staff.

And it is not only the finance bureaucracy that are guilty of pushing such closures. In 2005, for instance, the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry sponsored a paper by economist Des Moore advocating the closure of DVA and sending veterans to other departments. The offending paper was part of the Chamber's budget submission.

This is a slippery slope indeed. ■

And while we're about it

It has not only been the Repatriation Commission, DVA and government who have been guilty of attempting to take back hard won benefits from war veterans.

For instance, in 2005 the **Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry** recommended to government that it scrap DVA and send veterans to Centrelink, Health and other government departments.

Here is our letter of reproach to them.

Chief Executive
Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
17 May 2005

Dear Chief Executive,

ACCI Advocating Reduction of Benefits for Disabled War Veterans and War Widows

We would have thought the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry would look kindly on disabled war veterans. After all, they were disabled helping to keep Australia safe for commerce and industry to prosper. And we can't help noticing Commerce and Industry have indeed prospered.

And it goes further than that, doesn't it.

While our troops have died and been wounded on the battlefield, Commerce and Industry have profited supplying the nations war needs.

Take the Korean War for instance. While Australian troops were fighting the numerically superior, ferocious Chinese army in minus 20 degree Centigrade temperatures with death and

*Perhaps it is too late for us
to say
'Lest We Forget'.*

*It seems you have already
forgotten.*

amputations from frost bite a daily reality, Australian farmers were buying Mercedes and Pontiacs as the war pushed up the wool price to record highs.

Vietnam veterans are still suffering thirty years after the war's end. Worse, their families are suffering. It is a sad fact that the children of Vietnam veterans have a 300% higher suicide rate than their equivalent in the general community and their wives have a high rate of psychological distress. But during that ten year war, Commerce

(Continued on page 16)



and Industry did very well, thank you very much.

Currently, there is a lot of talk about Australian Commerce and Industry gaining preferential access to reconstruction and primary produce contracts in Iraq because our troops were part of the invasion and are now part of the occupation. In other words, Australian Commerce and Industry hopes to slide into lucrative contracts in Iraq on the backs of our troops risking death, wounding and shattered lives.

Not that Commerce and Industry should not make profits supplying Australia's war needs. Neither should they shrink from taking advantage of Australia's participation in the Iraq war. It's just that, as you are benefiting because of the sacrifices of life and health of our troops, we'd expect a modicum of gratitude. Surely we have the right to expect the Chamber to at least favour the troops disabled fighting those wars to be granted generous compensation and given the best care.

It is shocking to us that you are advocating the opposite.

You are advocating that the Service pension, War Widows pension and the TPI (Totally and Permanently Incapacitated) pension be reduced in value and that the Department of Veterans Affairs be disbanded with disabled war veterans and war widows administered by various departments such as Welfare and Health.

It seems it suits you to categorise us as unworthy welfare cases rather than veterans being compensated for war caused death, injuries and illnesses.

'Gratitude' seems not a strong contender against 'greed' in the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

You lay it all out in a document titled *Commonwealth Spending (and Taxes) Can Be Cut --- And Should Be* which can be found on web-site http://www.acci.asn.au/text_files/

[Discussion%20Papers/Cutting%20Government%20Spending.pdf](#)

At the end of page 19 and the beginning of page 20 is your attack on the pensions and care of disabled veterans and war widows.

You are aware that wages increase over time at a higher rate than the cost of living. Presently, the Service and War Widows pensions are increased as wages increase. These pensions were moved onto wage based indexation in 1997 when it became only too evident that they were falling behind community income standards. Most recently this wage based indexation was applied to part of the TPI (Totally and Permanently Incapacitated) pension.

So you are advocating that war veterans' and war widows' pensions presently indexed to increases in wages be reduced by being indexed, as in the dark past, to increases in the cost of living. The Chamber doesn't seem to care that such a change would cause the standard of living of disabled war veterans and their families as well as war widows, to continually slide backwards compared with the standard of living of the general community. In fact, it seems you would welcome such an outcome.

The Chamber is also advocating the closing down of the Department of Veterans Affairs with disabled war veterans and widows thrown to the mercy of a variety of other departments including Welfare and Health.

The Department of Veterans Affairs administers legislation which is described as 'beneficial'. The law requires that war veterans be treated in a 'beneficial' manner, that they be given, for instance, 'the benefit of the doubt'. This makes the way the Department of Veterans Affairs administers war veterans very different indeed from the way Welfare and Health administer their clients. Further, the Department of Veterans Affairs, as a matter of long standing practice,

consults with and is advised by representatives of the war veteran community. To a far greater degree than in any other government department, this consultation with client representatives is built into the Repatriation committee structure. Indeed, cooperation extends to the Department financially assisting ex-service organisation to train its volunteers to help run the claims application and appeals advocacy system.

It seems the Chamber thinks this arrangement 'spoils' disabled war veterans. We are, it would seem, not worthy of such a cooperative system. We note, however, that you did not judge us unworthy to fight and die on the battlefield while your members made wartime profits. The Chamber is an influential organisation. Your attack on war veterans' compensation and care is designed to convince the government to act. This is

worrying to us, as the government is already involved in downgrading the special place war service has in the areas of compensation and care. There was recently, for instance, the departmental proposal to reduce the number and quality of artificial limbs given to war veterans who had lost limbs on the battlefield. The bureaucrats' excuse was that the reduction would align limbless war veterans' entitlement to the parsimonious civilian welfare entitlement. Perhaps you would support that proposal too.

Your attack on disabled war veterans and war widows is a great disappointment to us.

**Perhaps it is too late for us to say
'Lest We Forget'.**

It seems you have already forgotten.

Yours truly,
Tim McCombe
President ■

**“ ‘Gratitude’ seems
not a strong
contender against
‘greed’ in the
Australian Chamber of
Commerce and
Industry. ”**

Did you know the Commonwealth Ombudsman is available for complaints against the Department of Veterans Affairs?

THE Commonwealth Ombudsman is also the Defence Force Ombudsman (DFO). The DFO is an independent complaints mechanism for serving and former Defence members. We are external to Defence.

If your complaint is about Veterans' Affairs benefits, compensation, Defence Service Home Loans, or the Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits Scheme, you should try to resolve the problem with the relevant agency before approaching us. If you are not satisfied with the outcome you can complain to us.

By phone: call 1300 395 776 between 9am and 5pm (AEDT) Monday to Friday. (Calls from mobile phones at mobile phone rates)

Online: Online Form: <https://forms.business.gov.au/smartforms/servlet/SmartForm.html?formCode=oco-complaint-form>

By email: ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au

In writing: GPO Box 442, Canberra ACT 2601



"How else are we going to pay for the war?"

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NEW SOUTH WALES PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Firstly, let me extend mine and the Committees best wishes for Christmas 2017, and a prosperous and safe 2018. We hope the year brings you and your loved ones health and good will.

You are obviously aware that our NSW Head Office is located in Granville a Sydney suburb where a dedicated team of volunteers together with three employees service the needs of current and former members of the ADF. They do so selflessly and each possess a range of skills that collectively ensure that the Granville office maintains its status as a Centre of Excellence for those seeking advice on pension and/or compensation claims. Our former and current ADF members are the only reason why we exist and we continue to keep the DVA on their toes in the interests of our members and clientele generally. Our dedicated team prefer that you make an appointment prior to your visit to ensure that sufficient time is allocated to hear details of any claim you may have with the Department of Veterans' Affairs and we will lodge that claim on your behalf at no monetary cost to you.

This dedication does not only exist in our Granville office and obviously extends to our fifteen NSW sub-branches extending from the Far North Coast to Newcastle & Hunter, west to Mudgee and down as far as Wentworth- Coomealla. Each sub-branch may vary in terms of its services to their district membership from innovative fund-raising, pension and compensation claims, commemorations, social events, camaraderie and even event pottery classes. A full list of our NSW sub-branches including contact details are available in each issue of our Journal and on our website www.vvfragranville.org.

2018 is yet another significant year in our Nation's proud military history. Two of the most prominent commemorations will be the 100th anniversary of the end of the Great War and, particularly for Vietnam Veterans, the 50th Anniversary of the Battles of Coral and Balmoral which took place in May/June 1968 in Binh Duong Province, South Vietnam. These battles involved 1RAR, 3RAR, 'A' Sqn 3rd Cav. Regt, 'C' Sqn 1st Armd Regt, 12 Field Regt RAA and 161 Bty RNZA and resulted in the loss of 25 Australian lives and 99 wounded. New Zealand and the US Army each had five wounded. 267 enemy were killed, seven injured and 11 captured. These actions were significant indeed and will feature in issues of the Journal throughout 2018.

We remind those parties concerned that all who are organising ceremonies, services and functions for the 'Battles of Coral and Balmoral' during 2018, are invited to place free advertising within our March and July issues next year, as well as prominence on our website.

Lest We Forget.

Frank Cole
President,
VVPPAA NSW

Jesse Bird's suicide

Minister denies access to full report of investigation into DVA's mismanagement

(how bad must it have been)

The Facts

Jesse Bird committed suicide in June this year, just weeks after his claim for permanent impairment he had been pursuing for almost two years was rejected by DVA.

The decision came despite the Department accepting initial liability, in August 2016, for Mr Bird's post-traumatic stress disorder, major depressive disorder and alcohol abuse.

The Department told Jesse, "the impairment you suffer from ... post-traumatic stress disorder, major depressive disorder, alcohol abuse, is not considered permanent and stable at this time". It was to be reviewed some time later.

But it is established that PTSD increases the sufferer's risk of suicide¹.

The 32-year-old Afghan war veteran had warned DVA he was suicidal and under severe financial stress as did Jesse's veteran advocate.

Jesse was not given a face to face interview to assess his situation.

He was refused available 'interim payments' which would have tided him over till his case was reviewed despite repeated requests.

Jesse's veteran advocate claims he, the advocate, was accused by the Department of "trying to use emotional blackmail simply to win one of his cases" when he warned them of the risk of Jesse's suicide.

Jesse died with \$5.20 in the bank.

¹ 'Suicidality in Australian Vietnam veterans and their partners'
Brian I. O'Toole (University of Sydney Brain & Mind Research Institute), Tammy Orreal-Scarborough, Deborah Johnston, Stanley V. Catts, Sue Outram, in Journal of Psychiatric Research xxx (2015) 1-7.

The story

IN 2007, Jesse joined the Army and, after initial training, was posted to 1RAR in Townsville. In 2009 1RAR deployed to Oruzgan Province in Afghanistan.

He was an infantryman but also trained to be a first-response battlefield medic.

He suffered the trauma that both those jobs might cause.

On his return with 1RAR to Australia, Jesse began to suffer the effects of that trauma.

Jesse couldn't hold down a job and relied on his parents for financial support.

Eventually Jesse reached out to veteran advocate John McNeill for help.

In 2016, DVA accepted that Jesse was suffering from PTSD, major depressive disorder and alcohol abuse, but rejected his claim for permanent impairment on the grounds that it was 'not considered permanent and stable at this time'.

DVA's questionable policy that no economic rehabilitation possibility could be left unexplored before DVA would decide on a compensation claim was applied to him.

Jesse tried to jump through the hoops.

He drove to Geelong once a week to attend a PTSD course. But it was doing him no good. He felt submerged in confusion and depression.

And he couldn't work and had no money.

DVA refused to provide Jesse with interim payments to keep him afloat while they forced him through the rehabilitation circus.

Why DVA refused Jesse 'interim payments' is **THE QUESTION**. It would seem obvious that having been diagnosed with PTSD etc and unable to work, he would need some financial help till his claim for 'permanent impairment' was settled.

His advocate, veteran John McNeill, was worried about his mental state and informed DVA. John McNeill reports that DVA's response was to accuse him of emotional blackmail and to



refuse help.

Jesse himself contacted DVA pleading with them for financial help on several occasions. He even made an official complaint. It was dated 22 June 2017:

"I need real help, I have submitted all required paperwork to receive incapacity payments.

"The person who has been assigned to my case just doesn't care and cannot wait to get off the phone to me.

"I have come close to becoming another suicide statistic.

"I've done my time and now I need your help, please."

No help came.

Seven weeks after his rejection, Jesse Bird, alone in his Melbourne apartment, put on his army jumper, laid out his medals, and ended his life.

He had his rejection papers prominently displayed along with a lot of other paperwork that he had had to endure from DVA.

SUCH was the outcry over Jesse Bird's unnecessary death, that the Minister for Veterans

(Continued on page 22)



A picture of Jesse Bird sits next to his medals on his coffin (ABC News photo)

The investigation and report

Affairs ordered an investigation of the Repatriation Commission/DVA's management of his case.

In a damning report the inquiry found the Department did not comply with the law, failed to do an expected face-to-face welfare check and negligently declined to offer much-needed interim financial support.

Jesse was tragically let down by the very organisation responsible for looking after him. The management of his case was a tragic shambles.

Whilst the Minister has refused to release the full report (not even offering a redacted copy—one blacking out any sensitive names and information on the grounds of privacy), copies

obtained by news agencies show:

- DVA failed to comply with legislation and policy when it didn't register Jesse Bird's claim for his mental health conditions as including an incapacity payment claim.
- It also took 192 days to determine his claim when the benchmark is 120 days.
- DVA failed to follow up with Jesse Bird during key points in his case because of problems with its computer system including when he lodged a complaint saying he was suicidal.
- The Department should have issued a face-to-face welfare check but didn't.
- DVA failed to offer interim permanent impairment payments despite repeated requests for them.
- When the DVA delegate made

determinations about Jesse Bird's case they did not discuss his various options with him contrary to policy and due to resourcing pressures.

- Jesse Bird dropped out of counselling after two of his counsellors quit. He should have been handled as a complex case by the Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service but wasn't.
- Despite being unemployed Mr Bird was never offered vocational or rehabilitation services.

These failings come as no surprise to the VVFA that has watched the disorganisation and confusion in the Repatriation Commission/DVA worsen in recent years.

The Minister, though refusing to release even a redacted copy of the full report, has released its list of recommendations. They are designed to remedy the shambles that infected the management of Jesse Bird's case.

The many recommendations include reviews of the Repatriation Commission/DVA by the Productivity Commission and the Australian Audit Office. They will have much to discover.

These reviews and other recommendations, if pursued, can only improve the present shambles. But some of the recommendations are the same that emerged from the investigation of the tragic July 2008 immolation suicide of Garry McColley (covered in the December 2016 issue).

Will they never learn?

The Minister's refusal to release even a redacted copy of the full report reflects just how bad the report must be. ■

Full list of recommendations at: <https://www.dva.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/consultation%20and%20grants/reviews/BirdReview.pdf>



A SERVICE FOUNDED BY VIETNAM VETERANS

Military personnel are trained for operational duties, but this cannot always prepare the mind for the psychological impact of events that may be experienced or witnessed. The potentially confronting nature of combat and operational service means that military personnel can be exposed to significant, or multiple, traumatic events throughout their service.

VVCS provides free and confidential, nation-wide counselling and support for war and service-related mental health conditions, such as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety and depression. VVCS also provides relationship and family counselling to address issues that can arise due to the unique nature of military service. VVCS counsellors have an understanding of military culture and can work with clients to find effective solutions for improved mental health and wellbeing.

If you are a veteran or soldier in need of assistance, or know someone who is, we urge you to contact the VVCS or visit the At Ease website as soon as you become aware. It could save your life or a mates. (at-ease.dva.gov.au)



Funeral Expenses

(Vietnam veterans short changed)

DID you know the Department of Veterans Affairs grants up to \$2,000 for the funerals of eligible Vietnam veterans* but will give up to \$11,645 for the funerals of mainly younger veterans under different compensation schemes.

Why only up to \$2,000 for Vietnam veterans when others can be granted over \$9,000 more?

No good asking the Repatriation Commission; they just say the legislation's different for Vietnam veterans. The Repatriation Commission doesn't even seem embarrassed by this blatant discrimination.

To us it seems a simple matter of equal treatment. If veterans under other compensation schemes can be granted funeral expenses of up to \$11,645, so should Vietnam veterans—and the Repatriation Commission should be strongly advocating such equality to the Minister for Veterans Affairs; especially as the Commission includes two Major Generals. ■

*(See DVA Fact Sheets DP43, MRC 43 and MRC O4 for details)

Which Vietnam veterans are eligible for a funeral benefit?

Australian veterans are automatically entitled to a funeral benefit if, at the time of death, they were:

- receiving Special rate (T&PI) disability pension; or
- receiving Extreme Disablement Adjustment (EDA) rate pension; or
- receiving disability pension plus an allowance as a multiple amputee.

A funeral benefit may also be payable for a Vietnam veteran who died:

- from an accepted service-related disability; or
- in needy circumstances; or
- in an institution (including a hospital or nursing home); or
- travelling to or from an institution; or
- after discharge from an institution in which the veteran had received treatment for a terminal illness; or
- while being treated at home for a terminal illness.

A funeral benefit may be payable where a war widow(er), wholly dependent partner, child under 16 or full time student under 25 dies in severe financial need. Applications must be made within 12 months of the dependant's death.

Repatriation Commission/Department of Veterans Affairs

The three person Repatriation Commission advises the Minister for Veterans Affairs on Repatriation policy.

The Department of Veterans Affairs implements that policy when approved by the Minister.

The head of the Commission and the head of the Department are the same person.

So one is not independent of the other.

Speaking of one is to speak of both.



Veterans and Fraud: Guilty or Not Guilty?

(Just how true are those rumours of widespread scamming of the Repatriation system?)

A recent project in the National Office of our Federation, led us to investigate the incidence of fraud and non-compliance with respect to DVA claims by veterans. We examined the figures from DVA Annual Reports for the three years to FY2014-2015. The results are instructive.

- Less than 2% of total claims are investigated as being potentially fraudulent or non-compliant, and of those cases, fraud / non-compliance is detected in only 14% of cases.
- Where fraud/non-compliance is detected, the number of cases is less than 0.5% of total claims.
- In comparison, and as best can be determined by looking at the Comcare annual reports, the figure of 0.5% is less than half the equivalent figure for Comcare claims.

DVA Annual Reports provide cost figures for fraud/non-compliance, but year-to-year comparisons are difficult because the measured categories are not consistent year-to-year. For FY 2014-2015, the cost of fraud/non-compliance represented 0.01% of the total DVA budget, but this does not include the total cost of all fraud prevention and detection measures e.g. staff and

training costs, data matching costs, analysis costs, investigation costs etc..

We presented our analysis to DVA. They confirmed that our figures were accurate, and agreed that we present them at an ESORT meeting. In submitting the figures to DVA, we requested that they elaborate on their Risk Management and Community Compliance Model,

and that they explain how they evaluate fraud/non-compliance statistics against the framework of that model. Obviously, DVA must concern itself with fraud and non-compliance, but we were requesting some sort of cost-benefit analysis. The agenda item as presented indicated



that DVA would speak to the figures, but on the day, they didn't.

There is no definitive answer to the Guilty/ Not Guilty question, but the figures lead to the conclusion, first, that the overwhelming majority (99.5%) of veterans, do not seek to abuse the system, and second, that the indication is that risk and prevention measures are effective. The overall figure of less than 0.5% of total claims being found to be non-compliant or fraudulent, reflects well on the integrity of veterans.

Next time you hear someone asserting that veterans rort the system, just tell them that DVA statistics don't support their assertion. ■

The Minefield

Every war, it seems, has its disasters brought on by misunderstanding the enemy.

In the case of the Vietnam War it was not realising and acknowledging who the enemy was.

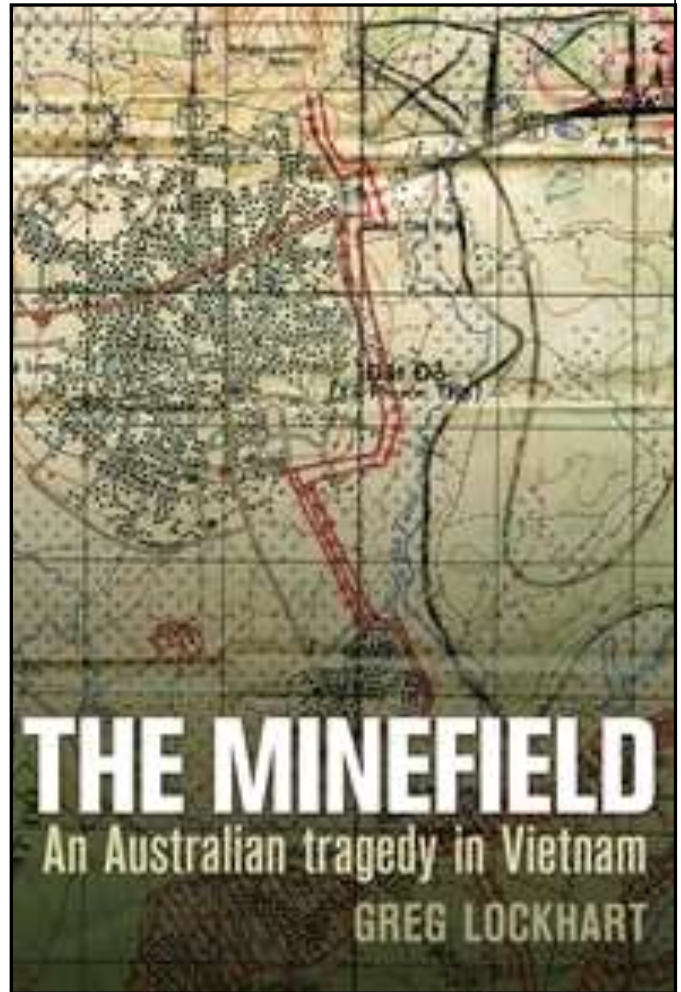
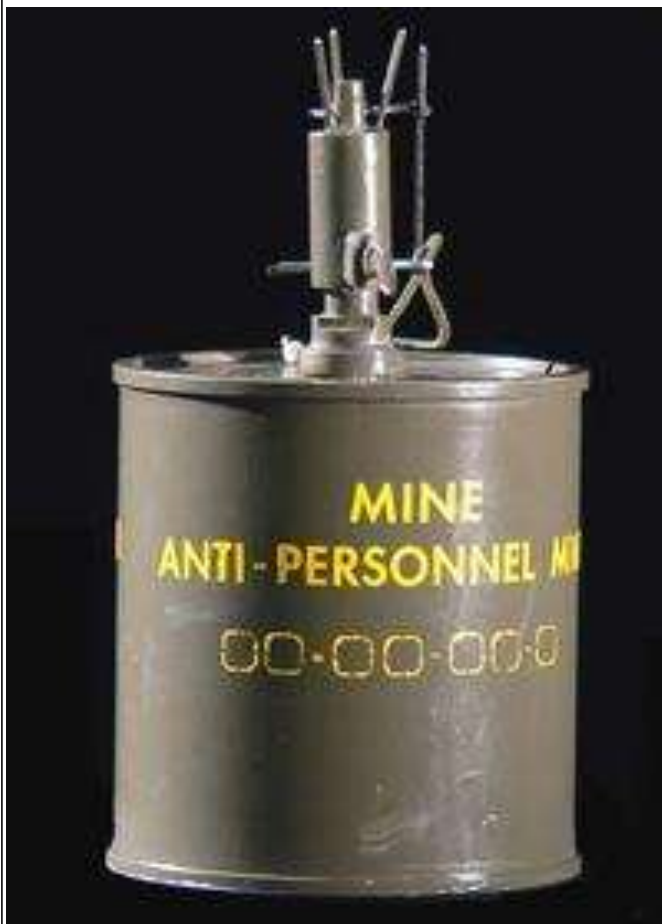
So it happened that we built a deadly minefield designed to keep the enemy out of the populated areas, when the enemy always had been part of the populated areas.

The result of this misunderstanding was that we had a minefield, against all the principles of mine warfare, with the enemy on both sides.

Indeed it was people from the villages the minefield was meant to protect who lifted thousands of the 25,000 jumping jack mines and placed them in the path of Australian and allied soldiers, with great destructive effect.

How could this happen?

Read Greg Lockhart's book to find out. ■



It is the best book so far written about Australia's participation in the Vietnam war.

Written ten years ago and still selling well.

To get your copy simply ring the NSW Branch Granville Office on 02 9682 1788.

Or order online at www.vvfagranville.org ■

Dr Greg Lockhart is a Vietnam veteran, having served with AATTV.

He is an eminent historian whose work has been widely acknowledged.

His writing of this excellent book came from the VVFA's concern that it knew very little about the Minefield when dealing with veterans damaged by their contact with it.

He is the VVFA's honorary historian. ■

A Dangerous Tool

Careful it's not 'Hurry up to nowhere'

THE new DVA *MyService* on-line application for compensation is presently available to serving ADF members and those who enlisted after 30 June 2004. DVA plans to open up these on-line applications to more veterans in coming months.

In their Spring edition of 'Vetaffairs' – Transforming DVA- it is proudly announced that the new '*MyService*' on-line application-for-compensation trial reduced processing of claims to an average 28 days, with some claims assessed in as little as 2 days.

While any speeding up of the present unsatisfactory tardiness in determining veterans' compensation claims is welcome, there are 'traps for young players' for veterans completing on-line claims, unassisted by a trained Advocate.

In short, a veteran filling out the on-line forms without help from a trained Advocate, then just leaving it up to DVA to adjudicate, is allowing DVA to be both Advocate and adjudicator—not a good idea.

Why is it not a good idea?

It is a sad fact that the goodwill of DVA cannot be relied on. The high number of successful appeals to the Veterans Review Board against claims rejected by DVA is testament to this. And then, of course, if any further evidence was required, there's the Jesse Bird case (see previous article).

So How Did We Get to this Point of requiring

an Advocate's help?

History is replete with inadequate government attempts to reasonably compensate soldiers sent to fight Australia's wars.

As far back as 1901 the Commonwealth Government ignored the 4,000 Australians who fought in the first Boer war of the 1880s. It was left, under Army Articles, to each State to provide some meagre help through the Imperial Government and charity.

Veterans of the second Boer War, in which 16,000 Australians served, faced a string of obstacles for compensation from the Commonwealth Government. Indeed, these soldiers were not able to seek due compensation pensions until after WW1, even though the Commonwealth Government first made provision for compensation for the Defence Forces of Australia in the Defence Act 1903, and the Naval Defence Act of 1910.

For veterans of other wars, regulations were promulgated under the Defence Act and were in existence by 1909, providing for payments of compensation to be made on the basis of a discretion exercised by a Board appointed to inquire into each case of injury or disablement.

The Board could recommend compensation only if the serviceman had not contributed to the injury by any fault of his own. If a nervous veteran did not present his case in the right way, if he missed out on some technicality, or omitted



some salient fact, he missed out on a pension. So, by 1916 the forerunner of the RSL, *The Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League of Australia* (RSSILA), saw that it was necessary to assist returned service personnel organize and process their compensation claims.

When Major-General WT Bridges was given the task of raising 20,000 volunteers at the outbreak of WW1, he advised the Government on 8 August 1914, that pensions should be guaranteed to men enlisting and to their dependents in case of death, and compensation in the case of disablement through wounds.

The War Pensions Act 1914 Act was assented to on 21 December 1914 and provided for compensation for death, injury or disease incurred as a result of active service outside Australia. The scheme of this Act was later

enhanced by the Australian Soldiers' Repatriation Fund Act 1916 and the Australian Soldiers' Repatriation Act 1917 and was finally consolidated into the Australian Soldiers' Repatriation Act 1920.

This Act, later renamed the Repatriation Act 1920, continued as the principal legislative basis for compensation for war service until its repeal and substitution by the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986 (the VEA). Under the Repatriation Act, compensation was payable for injuries or death suffered during war service, including service in World Wars 1 and 2, Korea, Malaya and Vietnam. But there was disagreement on the interpretation of the Act between DVA and the veteran community.

This disagreement continued even after a

(Continued on page 30)

1977 legislative amendment cleared up the issue in the veterans' favour. Even then, as the Agent Orange Royal Commission stated, DVA tried to find ways round court decisions to implement their anti-veteran bias.

Even after being castigated by the Royal Commission, a recalcitrant DVA persisted in its harsh interpretation, even though the appeals tribunals were interpreting the law in the same way as the Royal Commission and the veterans.

It was not until 1994, with the establishment of the Repatriation Medical Authority, that the obstructionist DVA gave in.

It was in the face of this attack by DVA on veterans' benefits, that the use of trained Advocates by veterans claiming compensation for Service related illnesses and injuries, became more and more essential.

Whilst these Acts have been generous in their intent, their application is complicated and DVA's interpretation of them has often led to anything but generous decisions.

Current information – DVA (October 2017)

How are claims for compensation determined?

The **Repatriation Medical Authority** (RMA) determines the causes of illnesses and injuries and publishes them in things called Statements of Principle (SOPs). These determinations are made at two standards of proof, one for peace-time service, the other for war service. RMA findings can be appealed to the **Specialist Medical Review Council** (SMRC).

The SOPs are used by DVA decision-makers when determining claims for compensation under the **Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986** and the **Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act**.

The **Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986** (VEA) covers service in wartime and certain operational deployments, as well as peacetime

service between 7 December 1972 – 30 June 2004. For peacetime service eligibility, a member who had not completed a qualifying period of three years service prior to 7 April 1994 is not covered under the VEA, unless they were medically discharged.

British nuclear test defence service during the 1950's and 1960's in Australia is also covered when the relevant criteria are met. If you have an injury or disease arising out of, or aggravated by, a period of full-time service when you were covered

under the VEA, you may be eligible for a disability pension and medical treatment.

You may also be eligible for compensation under the **Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Act 1988 (DRCA)** for the same disability and, if so, any compensation payable is

offset against your pension. This is separate to and distinct from offsetting which occurs under the **MRCA** and **DRCA** between incapacity payments and the employer-funded portion of any Commonwealth superannuation received (see article, *Ridiculous Off-Setting* in this edition).

Once known as the **Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988 (SRCA)**, and since 2017, the **Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Act 1988 (DRCA)**, provides similar rehabilitation and compensation to that provided under the **Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004 (MRCA)**, for injuries and diseases suffered as a result of peacetime and peacekeeping service up to and including 30 June 2004 and operational service between 7 April 1994 and 30 June 2004. However, it does not limit the application claims to specific ADF members.

The **Military Rehabilitation and**

Compensation Act 2004 (MRCA) provides rehabilitation and compensation coverage for members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) who served on or after 1 July 2004, and includes, among others, all members of Permanent forces, the Reserves, Cadets, those holding an honorary rank or appointed to the ADF and perform acts at the direction of the ADF. Others may be provided for as well if so declared in writing by the Minister of Defence to be members of the ADF

So a veteran's situation in all this may be very complicated indeed. Under what legislation is he entitled to claim compensation? Perhaps its more than one or perhaps he has a choice. But which legislation will promise the best result?

Whilst these Acts have been generous in their intent, their application is complicated and DVA's interpretation of them has often led to anything but generous decisions.

This complexity has led to the growth of a network of diligent, trained Advocates, often working voluntarily, skilled at presenting the truth in a way that allows determining officers to most easily tick their boxes. The Advocates usually work for ex-service organisations.

Demonstrating both the harshness with which DVA can treat compensation claims, and the skill and dedication of Advocates, more and more cases rejected by DVA have been won on appeal to the Veterans Review Board. The same success has been achieved at the higher appeal tribunal, the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

DVA have, for years, taken far too long to process claims and they hope *MyService* on-line claims will reduce processing time. They may be suggesting that veterans simply fill out the forms, unassisted, and send them off to DVA for appraisal.

Our advice: DON'T DO IT! Get a trained Advocate's help. ■

OUTREACH PROGRAM PENSION TOURS

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

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

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

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

The team will provide assistance and advice to ALL Veterans of ALL conflicts, including Peacekeeping and Peacemaking deployments.

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

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



At last No more official downplaying of the suicide rate

READERS will know that we have been railing against some Ministers and the Repatriation Commission saying that whilst every suicide is a tragedy, the rate of suicide amongst veterans is no greater than that of the general population.

The implication of these statements is, of course, that their service was not a factor.

We pointed out that the suicide rate amongst veterans, but for their service, should be considerably lower than the general population because the selection process for the military excludes those judged mentally unstable.

This means, of course, that a suicide rate for veterans which is the same as for the general population shows that there has been an increase in the rate due to service.

At last this has been authoritatively acknowledged.

National Mental Health Commission recently completed a *Review into the Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Services Available to current and former serving ADF members and their families*. In its report it said:

‘Data show that suicide rates are lower amongst current serving ADF members than in the general population, but higher for former serving ADF members ...This suggests that the population recruited for military service are at lower risk than the general population **(through active selection processes)**.’ (emphasis added)

Let's hope that settles the matter. ■



VIETNAM VETERANS PEACEKEEPERS & PEACEMAKERS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA (NSW BRANCH) Inc.

Affiliated with the Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia Inc.

2018 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL FORM (NSW ONLY)

SURNAME	FIRST NAME	SECOND NAME

STREET ADDRESS

SUBURB/TOWN	STATE	POST CODE

HOME PHONE	MOBILE PHONE	OTHER PHONE

EMAIL ADDRESS [PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY]

SERVICE NUMBER	SERVICE UNIT	O'SEAS AREA OF OPERATIONAL SERVICE

NEXT OF KIN	RELATIONSHIP	CONTACT PHONE [NOK]

ITEM	QUANTITY	PRICE	TOTAL
MEMBERSHIPS SUBS	(YEARS)	@\$30.00 PER YEAR	\$
DONATION	(AMOUNT ONLY)		\$
RAFFLE TICKET/s		@\$2.00 EACH	\$
MERCHANDISE			
			\$
			\$
			\$
			\$
Stock item numbers and prices are available on line and from merchandise lists at branches		TOTAL AMOUNT DUE	\$

PREFERRED PAYMENT METHOD (Circle one only) CASH CHEQUE MONEY ORDER CREDIT CARD

CREDIT CARD DETAILS (Mastercard or VISA only)

CARD HOLDER NAME (PRINT)

CREDIT CARD NUMBER

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EXPIRY DATE	TRANSACTION AMOUNT	SIGNATURE
(Mnth/Yr) ____/____	\$	

All cheques and money orders payable to VVPPAA NSW Branch Inc. Mail to PO Box 170 Granville, NSW 2142
Credit Card payments may be phoned in to (02) 9682 1788 Mon-Fri 9:30am – 3pm.

OFFICE USE ONLY

MEMBERSHIP RECEIPT DATE:	DONATION RECEIPT DATE:
MEMBERSHIP RECEIPT N ^o :	DONATION RECEIPT N ^o :
MEMBERSHIP CARD NUMBER:	COMPLETED & ISSUED BY (PRINT):
COMPLETED & ISSUED BY (PRINT):	BANK SHEET ENTRY BY (PRINT):

MERCHANDISE

CHANGE OF ADDRESS FORM

SURNAME

FIRST NAME

SECOND NAME

--	--	--

OLD DETAILS [PRINT CLEARLY]

OLD ADDRESS

--

SUBURB/TOWN

STATE

POST CODE

--	--	--

HOME PHONE

MOBILE PHONE

OTHER PHONE

--	--	--

NEW DETAILS [PRINT CLEARLY]

NEW ADDRESS

--

SUBURB/TOWN

STATE

POST CODE

--	--	--

HOME PHONE

MOBILE PHONE

OTHER PHONE

--	--	--

EMAIL ADDRESS [PRINT CLEARLY]

--

YOUR SIGNATURE

MEMBERSHIP NUMBER

Complete all sections and post to:

**The Secretary
VVPAA NSW
PO Box 170
Granville
NSW 2142**

OFFICE USE ONLY**MEMBERSHIP REGISTRY****DETAILS CHANGED****DATE:** ____/____/____**INITIALS:** _____



Ridiculous Off-setting

(Are younger veterans being robbed?)

READERS may know that Vietnam veterans come under a rehabilitation and compensation scheme known as the Veterans Entitlement Act (VEA).

Younger veterans can come under a different scheme known as the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act (MRCA).

Under the VEA, disabled Vietnam veterans may be entitled for a TPI pension. The equivalent for younger veterans coming under the MRCA scheme is known as the Special Rate Disability

Pension (SRDP).

The younger veterans' Special Rate Disability Pension (unlike Vietnam veterans' TPI pension) is subject to ridiculous and unfair off-setting.

It means this: if a disabled younger veteran is granted an SRDP pension (equivalent to a TPI pension) and he or she is also eligible for military superannuation, the SRDP pension is reduced by the amount of the Commonwealth contribution to military superannuation.

But the reasons for the younger veteran receiving each of these payments are separate and distinct. They bare no relation to one another.

What is Superannuation? The Australian Taxation Office defines super as “A system where money is placed in a fund to provide for a person's retirement.” It is the result of the employer's (the Commonwealth) and the veterans' contributions during his or her military career.

What is a Special Rate Disability Pension? The SRDP, like the TPI pension, is compensation for a Service caused disability and is paid at the same rate as the TPI pension.

So why should the SRDP pension be reduced by the amount of the Commonwealth's contribution to military superannuation?

It makes no sense.

To make the off-setting even more ridiculous, the SRDP pension is reduced only for *Commonwealth* Superannuation; State or private superannuation payments do not trigger off-setting.

Common sense demands that there be no such ridiculous off-setting.

But like the participants at the Mad Hatter's Tea Party, the Repatriation Commission and the Minister for Veterans Affairs seem unswayed by common sense. ■

Repatriation Commission/Department of Veterans Affairs

The three person Repatriation Commission advises the Minister for Veterans Affairs on Repatriation policy.

The Department of Veterans Affairs implements that policy when approved by the Minister.

The head of the Commission and the head of the Department are the same person.

So one is not independent of the other. Speaking of one is to speak of both.

NSW Secretary Report

Once again we say THANK YOU to our many members who have made a financial donation to their State Branch. Without these donations we would find it much more difficult to cater to the needs of our war veterans, service and ex-service persons generally. Periodically, we will publish a list of individual NSW Branch donors of amounts of \$200 or more. Whilst all donations are gratefully received, and combined are of enormous assistance to us, they are too numerous to list. Donors to the NSW Branch of \$200 or more since the last Journal were:

\$2,500	Greg Isolani
\$2,000	Joseph Bartos
\$1,000	Robert Allen
	Anonymous
\$500	Gus Helm
	Leslie Libberson
	John Crompton
	Arthur Kneller
	Dorothy Mammatt
	Anonymous
\$300	Debra McCormick-Lumsden
\$250	Colin Robinson
\$200	Kerry Bee
	Frank Curphey
	Harry Ford

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

Ron O'Connor
Hon. Secretary
NSW Branch

PSK FINANCIAL SERVICES ARTICLE

Are you getting the best out of your retirement savings?

The TV ads are true – choose the right superannuation fund and you are likely to end up with more money in retirement. But how do you know which one? What level of investment risk should you be taking, what investment options to choose, what level of fees should you be paying, voluntary contributions, insurance..... it can all be quite complicated and really depends on your individual circumstances.

While there are many factors to consider, ongoing fees are one thing that you really should be paying attention to. People who do not review their existing superannuation arrangements risk paying high costs that will rapidly eat into their retirement nest egg. The difference in costs between the cheapest and most expensive funds can be more than five times, with research showing that on an account balance of \$750,000, the cheapest annual cost is \$2,875 and the most expensive is \$16,425.

While superannuation investors cannot control returns from investment markets, they can certainly control the fees and costs they pay. Why pay any extra in fees than you have to?

Retirees generally want decent returns on low-risk investments so that they can preserve their capital for as long as possible. However, with interest rates at record lows and yields on cash investment so low, retirees are drawing-down more of their superannuation just to meet their living expenses. These factors make it very challenging for self-funded and partially self-funded retirees. This has become even more prevalent since the government tightened the DVA/Age Pension assets test rules.

There are two broad phases that characterise the superannuation lifecycle:

The accumulation phase: the time when you (and, if you work for someone else, your employer) put money into your super; and

The pension phase: the time when you withdraw

money from the fund, either through a pension/regular drawdown or lump sum payment.

Most retirees have what is typically known as an allocated pension (pension phase) – this is an income stream paid to the retiree by the fund with tax advantages – often in addition to a government part-pension. In return for the tax breaks, a minimum percentage of the allocated pension account balance must be withdrawn each year. That is to ensure the retirement savings are used for their intended purpose (not to mention the government doesn't want people having too much money in a tax-free environment!) and this percentage increases with age of the retiree.

How we can help?

We can help you review your fund along with helping you locate any lost superannuation that may have been paid on your behalf.

We can help you to determine whether the fund you are in is the most suitable for you by examining:

Administration fees - General administration fees to cover the cost of operating the fund and keeping your super account open.

Investment fees - Fees for managing your investment which can vary significantly for different investment options.

Indirect costs - Costs paid by your super fund to external providers that affects the value of your investment. Typically these are costs paid to investment managers.

Advice fees - Fees for personal advice provided about your super and other investments. Your adviser may also receive fees and commissions for certain investments they recommend to you and these are not included in product disclosure statements (PDS) by the super fund.

Switching fees - Fees for changing your

investment option within the fund.

Buy/sell spread - This is a fee that you may pay every time you make a transaction, including making a contribution, switch and withdrawal. The fee covers some or all of the cost of transactions entered by the fund.

Insurance premiums - The cost of insurance provided through your super fund. Many super funds have a set default insurance option. You can usually choose to lower or increase your level of cover based on your needs.

Exit fees - A fee for leaving the fund.

Investment and asset allocation: how your money is invested. Is it likely to achieve what you need and is it in line with your views on investment risk?

Generally, the only way to know if you're paying high fees is by finding out what your super fund is charging you, what you are getting for this and comparing the cost to other similar funds.

Our independent review will remove the complexity for you and help you decide how to best manage your precious nest egg, take control of your superannuation and reap the rewards in retirement.

We would like to wish you, your family friends and loves ones a Merry Christmas and all the very best for a happy and safe New Year.

If you would like to discuss further, please contact Paul Messerschmidt of PSK Financial Services on 02 9895 8800, 0414 811 777 or paulm@psk.com.au

This article contains information that is general in nature. It does not take into account the objectives, financial situation or needs of any particular person. You need to consider your financial situation and needs before making any decisions based on this information.



Advice that puts you first

Authorised Representative of Charter Financial Planning
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At PSK Financial Services our key focus is to guide you through life's financial challenges and our promise is to help you achieve financial peace of mind.

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Areas of advice:

- **DVA / Centrelink strategies**
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- **Retirement planning**
- **Aged Care**
- **Investment**
- **Estate planning**

For any questions regarding your financial situation please contact

Paul Messerschmidt MFinPlan, GradDip-FinPlan

Partner and Senior Financial Adviser

PSK Financial Services

Level 4, 3 Horwood Place, Parramatta NSW 2150

M 0414 811 777 | P (02) 9895 8800

E paulm@psk.com.au



REUNIONS & NOTICES

REUNIONS & NOTICES



AVCAT

SCHOLARSHIPS

FOR THE CHILDREN & GRANDCHILDREN
OF AUSTRALIAN VETERANS

The Australian Veterans' Children Assistance Trust is a national independent charity helping the children and grandchildren of ex-service men and women to a better future through tertiary education. Through the generous support of the Australian Government Department of Veterans' Affairs, ex-service organisations, corporate sponsors and private donors, we provide scholarships which assist recipients to obtain the tertiary qualification they need for their chosen career.

One of the scholarships administered by AVCAT is the **VVPPAA Scholarship**, specifically available for the children and grandchildren of Vietnam Veterans. Our proud association has seen many successful recipients achieve tertiary qualifications and reach their goals, that erstwhile may not have been available to them. We hope to continue this proud heritage long into the future with your help. It is through your generous support of this organization, and valued donations, that we keep the hopes of children alive.



Some of our recent recipients and successful achievers in their chosen fields

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

2014 Recipient

2019 scholarships
open in August 2018
and close at the end
of October 2018.
See below for more.

"Without the scholarship, achieving my goals would be almost impossible. The financial support has provided me the opportunity to study and without your support I would simply not be in the position I am in today, and for that I will be forever grateful". Recent recipient.

You are eligible to apply for a scholarship with AVCAT if you answer yes to the following questions:

- Are you a child or a grandchild of an Australian veteran? A veteran is a person who has rendered service as a member of the Australian Defence Force.
- Are you an Australian citizen or permanent resident?
- Are you enrolled, or planning to enrol, in tertiary studies for a minimum of one year?
- Will you be studying full-time next year?
- Are you or will you be eligible for Centrelink's Youth Allowance?
- Are you under 25 years of age?

To apply you should contact AVCAT and request to be added to the expressions of interest register.

Phone: 02 9213 7999

Web: avcat@dva.gov.au

PO Box K978 Haymarket, NSW 1240

VETERANS MORTALITY REPORT

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

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

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

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

Please print clearly

VETERANS DETAILS

SURNAME	FIRST NAME	SERVICE NUMBER

SVN UNIT/S	TOUR DATES

CAUSE OF DEATH (If known)

SR Service Related **UNK** Unknown **S** Suicide **O** Other)

DATE OF DEATH (If known)	LOCATION AT TIME OF DEATH	
	(TOWN)	(STATE)

YOUR NAME

SUBURB/TOWN	STATE	POST CODE

HOME PHONE	MOBILE PHONE	SIGNATURE

RETURN FORM TO: **The Welfare Officer**
VVPPAA NSW Branch
PO Box 170
Granville NSW 2142

Phone: 02 9682 1788
Fax : 02 9682 6134
Email: secretary@vfvagranville.org

SPECIAL FEATURE— SERIALISED HISTORY PART 4 & CONCLUSION

**CONTINUING THIS ISSUE WE BRING AN EXPOSE INTO ONE OF THE MOST
DEVISIVE PERIODS IN AUSTRALIA IN THE 20TH CENTURY...**

THE VIETNAM WAR — AN AUSTRALIAN PERSPECTIVE

Compiled from records, official reports, and historical accounts by Bob Freshfield.

THE RAAF IN VIETNAM

During the *Vietnam War* the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), contributed *Caribou STOL*, (Short Take Off and Landing), transport aircraft as part of the RAAF *Transport Flight Vietnam*, later redesignated No. 35 Squadron RAAF. Also the famed workhorse ('Huey') *UH-1 Iroquois* helicopters from No. 9 Squadron RAAF, and *English Electric Canberra* bombers from No. 2 Squadron RAAF, and the large lift carrier *Hercules* of 36 and 37 Squadrons.



RAAF DHC-4A *Caribou* aircraft were in the process of delivery from Canada to Australia, when it was realised that the short take off and landing capabilities would be of benefit in *Vietnam*. Three aircraft were diverted from *Butterworth, Malaysia* to *Vietnam*, and arrived at *Vung Tau* on 8 August 1964. These three aircraft became RAAF *Transport Flight Vietnam (RTFV)* and operated as part of the *Southeast Asia Airlift System* and under the operational command of the USA 315th Troop Carrier Group (Assault) of the 315th Air Commando Wing, 2nd Air Division.

RTFV was redesignated 35 (Transport) Squadron on 1 June 1966 with fifteen aircraft. This followed quickly with the introduction of the long haul

'*Hercules*' Aircraft squadrons '36' and '37', transporting soldiers and equipment direct from Australia to *Vietnam*, including the return of wounded soldiers on medically equipped craft.

During its seven and a half years in *Vietnam* the *Caribous* (as both RTFV and 35 Squadron) had established an outstanding record of achievement for such a small unit, having flown nearly 80,000 sorties totalling 47,000 hours in the air, and carried more than 677,000 passengers, 36 million kg of freight and 5 million kg of mail. In achieving such loads, the Australian aircraft, crews and ground staff had set standards of flying, flying maintenance and safety unmatched by either American or VNAF transport squadrons.



Based at *RAAF Base Richmond*, west of Sydney, 36 squadron operated its fleet of *C-130A Hercules* aircraft on regular services to *Bien Hoa*, *Tan Son Nhut*, *Phan Rang*, *Vung Tau* and *Nui Dat* on logistic support for the *Australian Task Force (1ATF)*, including *medivac* flights of wounded personnel. Also, 37 Squadron, was equipped with the *C-130E Hercules*, and was employed mainly in the *medevac* role in specially modified aircraft, normal logistic flights were also flown to and from *Vietnam*. Both *Hercules* squadrons flew intensively during the withdrawal of *1ATF* in 1972.

No 2 Squadron RAAF with the famed *Canberra Bomber* deployed from *Butterworth*, Malaysia to *Phan Rang* air base, 35 kilometres south of *Cam Ranh Bay*, a large *USAF* base in the far east of *South Vietnam*, on 19 April 1967. 2 SQN 'Magpies' were part of the *35th Tactical Fighter Wing* and were tasked by *USHQ 7th Air Force* in *Saigon*, for eight sorties per day for seven days a week, in all areas of *South Vietnam* from April 1967 until its return to *Australia* in 1971.

The *Canberra* filled a gap in the *USAF* inventory as it was the only tactical aircraft in *South Vietnam* which bombed, visually, from straight and level flight, albeit at 350knots, prior to 1972. Flying about 5% of the Wing's sorties, 2SQN was credited with 16% of the bomb damage assessment.

The *Canberra Bombers* flew 11,963 bombing sorties, and two aircraft were lost. One went missing

during a bombing raid, and not recovered until April 2009. The remains of the (2) crew members were found in July 2009. The other was shot down by a surface-to-air missile, although both crew were rescued. The bombers dropped 76,389 bombs and were credited with 786 enemy personnel confirmed killed and a further 3,390 estimated killed, 8,637 structures, 15,568 bunkers, 1,267

sampans and 74 bridges destroyed. *RAAF* transport aircraft also supported *South Vietnam Army (ARVN)* ground forces. The squadron was awarded the *Vietnam Gallantry Cross Unit Citation* and a *United States Air Force Outstanding Unit Commendation* for its service in *Vietnam*.

The last *Canberra* mission in *Vietnam* was 31 May 1971 and was tasked in support of the *US 101st Airborne Division* in the *A Shau Valley*, an area frequented by the squadron many times over the previous two years. The squadron departed *Phan Rang* on 4 June 1971, arriving back in *Amberley* on 5 June, 13 years since it deployed to *Malaya* in 1958. *No 2 Squadron* air and ground crews performed exceptionally well in the air war in *South Vietnam* and carried on the fine traditions of strike squadrons in the *RAAF*.





The *UH-1 'Iroquois'* (or 'Hueys' as they were affectionately called), helicopters were used in many roles including medical evacuation and close air support of ground troops. Reformed in June 1962, '9 Squadron RAAF' was to be a Search and Rescue unit equipped with Bell UH-1Bs which were on order. Experimental Army support tasks, with heavily armed '*Huey gunships*' quickly supplanted the SAR role due to their success. In this role the unit deployed to Vung Tau, becoming operational with eight *choppers* on 13 June 1966. 9 Squadron delivered ammunition and food to Australian troops in the field, carried out troop insertions and extractions and were called on *Dust-Off* to evacuate wounded and other troops from the battle area. They were also involved with psy-war operations, dropping leaflets produced and provided by the US Army's Psychological and Passive Warfare Department and even aerial spraying of insecticides and herbicides around the Australian

bases of *Nui Dat* and *Vung Tau*.

Almost immediately after arrival, 9 Squadron Hueys were working closely with the Australian Special Air Service who maintained long range patrols. On 10 July 1966 two aircraft performed a hot extraction of a six-man SAS patrol. This type of action continued throughout the war and saved many who were being hotly pursued by an aggressive enemy force.

As with SAS operations, 9 Squadron became involved in

casevac (dustoff) soon after arriving in Vietnam. On 25 July 1966 five *Iroquois* flew out twenty members of 6RAR who had been killed or wounded during *Operation Hobart* north-east of Long Tan. USAF F-100s carried out air strikes on enemy positions only 100 metres from the landing area while the Hueys came in one at a time.





Total RAAF casualties in Vietnam included six killed in action, eight non-battle fatalities, 30 wounded in action and 30 injured. A small number of RAAF pilots also served in *United States Air Force* units, flying *F-4 Phantom* fighter-bombers or serving as forward air controllers.

Another example of the extreme situations crew found themselves in was on 21 August 1969 during an evacuation of wounded 5RAR personnel. During the hover to winch up the casualties the *Huey* came under sustained small arms and RPG attack. Both crewman were hit by bullets but saved from injury by their body armour, though a casualty was twice further wounded. Subsequently the aircraft was found to be holed in eleven places, including one round which had passed between the pilot's feet and smashed through the instrument panel and another which had holed the fuel tank.

9 Squadron's last missions were flown on 19 November 1971 and on 8 December the majority of the squadron's aircraft were embarked on *HMAS Sydney* and shipped back to *Australia*. During five and a half years in *Vietnam*, the unit's helicopters had flown over 237,000 sorties during which they had carried over 414,000 passengers, 4000 casevac's and nearly 12,000 tonnes of freight. The squadron suffered seven aircraft written off or destroyed and 37 damaged, 23 by ground fire; four members of the unit were killed, along with two others while attached to the squadron, and many more had been injured.

This then concludes the articles on *Australia's* armaments, and unit actions during the *Vietnam War*.

The following articles overleaf reflect on a time when military assistance to *South Vietnam* was curtailed by governments amidst a groundswell of civilian protestations at both the war and its toll on a young generation.

In ensuing years too, there were other battles that continue to be played out between *Vietnam Veterans*, successive governments, the *Repatriation Commission*, and the *Department of Veterans' Affairs*, in *Australia*.

Governments, Protestors, and Wars End

The *Vietnam War* was a complicated one and not open to purely military solutions. It was a war where politics, ideology and military warfare were woven into a single pattern. It was a war in which military commanders needed an understanding of political matters to make good decisions and where similarly, politicians needed an understanding of military matters to give effective direction.

The need for this dual understanding came from the nature of the war. There were many senior *US* and allied commanders, civilian and military, whose failure to understand the nature of the war resulted in tragic military mistakes, harmful political direction and dramatically wrong predictions of the progress of the war.

Couple these factors with changes to political parties, the ideology of the general public, in Australia over the ten year period of the war, then yes, most became disillusioned and lost the resolve to continue the support of the *South Vietnam* government. It could also be said, that for the most part, the *South Vietnamese* government could not win over the hearts and minds of its own people.

In *Australia* the *Menzies, Liberal*, government had been in power since *Robert Menzies* came to power in 1949. By the time he retired in 1966 he had introduced *Conscription* and sent *Australia* to war in *Vietnam*. In the *USA* *John F Kennedy* became *President* in 1961 until assassinated in 1963. He had seen the increase to *Advisors* to *Vietnam*, and his successor, *Lyndon Johnson* witnessed the escalation of the war until he reached the end of his term in 1969. His successor, *Richard Nixon*, vowed to 'bring our boys home'.

When *Menzies* retired in 1966 his successor, *Harold Holt*, declared 'all the way with *LBJ*', in reference to support of the *American President*, *Lyndon Baines Johnson*. *Gough Whitlam* took over as

leader of the opposition, *Labor Party*, in *Canberra* amid a groundswell of rising opposition to the war in *Vietnam*. After *Harold Holt* mysteriously disappeared, feared drowned at the end of 1967, newly elected *Liberal* leader, *John Gorton*, took over as *Prime Minister* in January 1968.

Amid this time of political change, by attrition, there was also military change in higher echelons. Commanders were confronted with different direction. Troops on the ground were subjected to changes in the way operations were carried out. Civilians in *Australia* too, were changing. Youth cried out for change. Since the early 1960s the world was confronted with a music *Pop* culture, which saw the rise of the *Hippy* and *Flower Power* movement, intertwined with increasing protests against the war in *Vietnam*.

By mid 1971 both *America* and *Australia* began withdrawing troops from *South Vietnam*. In July 1971 the *Australian* government reduced *National Service* from 2 years to 18 months, but this had little effect on an electorate that wanted conscription stopped and all troops pulled out of *Vietnam*. *Gough Whitlam's Labor Party* was gaining momentum with its promise to do both at the next election due in late 1972. *John Gorton* quit as *Prime Minister* at the end of 1971, leaving *William McMahon* to take over the *Liberal Party* and lead it to the next elections.

Meanwhile, in *Phuoc Tuy* province, by the end of September 1971, 4 *RAR/NZ* was the only battalion of *Australian* and *New Zealand* infantry troops remaining. Over the next few months 1 *ATF* base *Nui Dat* was being partly handed over to *ARVN* forces and the rest dismantled. All units except *D Company 4 RAR/NZ*, which remained in the field patrolling the province, were redeployed to the 1st *Australian Logistics Support Group – 1ALSG* - encampment at *Vung Tau*. A troop of *APCs* from 3 *Cav Regiment* remained with 4 *RAR*.

Although some remnants of units remained in *Vung Tau* and *Saigon* until March 1972 and others,

like the *Saigon Embassy Guards*, until June 1973, it is generally thought that Australian commitment ceased with the signing of the *Paris Peace Accord* on 23 January 1973. The *RAAF* returned for humanitarian evacuations in 1975, before the fall of *Saigon*.

The *Paris Peace Accord*, was intended to bring an end to war in *Vietnam*, but neither the North nor the South honoured the terms of the accord, and in March 1975 *North Vietnamese* forces began a concerted push south. Early victories by *NVA* forces led to a widespread loss of morale among the troops of the *ARVN*. The speed of the advance took all parties by surprise, and on 30 April, with *Saigon* occupied, the remnants of the *South Vietnamese* government unconditionally surrendered.

So ended the most prolonged war in *Australian* history. A war that divided the nation in so many different ways, at every level of society. As promised, *Gough Whitlam*, elected in December 1972, repealed the *National Service* legislation and conscription was ended. However, this seemingly final act of overseeing the last remnants of *Australian* forces pulled out of *Vietnam*, was really only the beginning of another chapter for the *veterans* who went to war in *South Vietnam*.

An ominous sign was over the horizon. One that did not surface for many years after cessations of hostilities.

Yet one that has affected nearly every service man and woman who went to fight in that war.

It is known among *Vietnam Veterans* as '*The Battle after the war*' - *The aftermath*—and its name became a household phrase in the late 1970s to early 1980s.

'AGENT ORANGE'.

The fight goes on

The *Vietnam Veteran* returning home found a bewildering set of circumstances confronting them. The government *Department of Veterans Affairs* - *DVA* - , set up to assist the returning veterans of *World War 1*, and overseeing the plight of veterans from that time with legislated Acts of parliament to apply a duty of care toward veterans, appeared ever determined to thwart *Vietnam Veterans* of their rightful benefits.

Society shunned them, and in a peculiar turn-around, even the *Returned Services League of Australia* - *RSL* - , an association borne out of the need to look after veterans special needs, turned a blind eye when that call came from *Vietnam Veterans*. Many *conscripts* returning to their old jobs were told it was no longer available, in direct contradiction of the *National Service Act*, with companies ignoring their pleas and advising the Act no longer applied because it had been repealed.

There are many articles and publications that uncover the worst of treatment that befell the *Vietnam Veteran*, and why he found it necessary to band together in its own *association* in an effort to resolve the issues. The recommended study list



follows as an addendum following this article. They include, among others, the fight for a Counselling Service for Vietnam Veterans to assist them to rejoin and repatriate estranged family due to the effects of *Post Traumatic Stress Disorder/s – PTSD* -, and the eventual setting up of the *Vietnam Veterans Counselling Service – VVCS* - administered by *DVA*.

Still, other measures were needed to change the mindset of the *DVA*. *Vietnam Veterans* as a body, lobbied local and federal members of parliament, continually berating the methodology being used by the *DVA*. With the assistance of sympathetic lawyers and barristers at the *Administrative Appeals Tribunal – AAT* -, *Vietnam Veterans* won case after case against the government, proving time and again, that *DVA* staffers were applying the wrong interpretation of the *Veterans Entitlement Act – VEA* -, as applied to veterans.

Most sinister of all was the revelation that our troops in Vietnam had been exposed to toxic herbicides (generically known as Agent Orange) sprayed from the air and on the ground, the most

dangerous of which degraded only very slowly, infecting the soil and the waterways, and accumulating in seafood.

In the late 70s veterans banded together to demand to know to what they had been exposed to, and what that might mean for them and their children.. Good evidence existed that such exposure might cause cancer in veterans and abnormalities in their children, but *DVA*, despite Repatriation legislation demanding it give the ‘benefit of the doubt’ when assessing compensation claims, remained in denial..

The veterans successfully campaigned for a Royal Commission, which found that under Repatriation legislation, two categories of cancer could be linked with exposure. *DVA*, however, continued to deny the link.



Today, more than 50 years later, *Vietnam Veterans* are still taking the fight up to DVA, and proving by winning most cases contested, that the fight is well justified. Perhaps it was the training, or even the socio-mindset of the educated soldier sent to *South Vietnam*, that make us what we are and what we do today. Hopefully, our younger veteran comrades will continue forcefully reminding the government and DVA of its responsibility to care for those injured physically and psychologically by the trauma of fighting Australia's wars.

Addendum – recommended reading and further studies.

1. *The truth behind the Australian Vietnam Veterans campaigns to gain rights as returned veterans and the need to combat those supposedly in place to assist us. Can be found on our national website*

www.vvfa.org.au/fedstory.pdf

2. *The full story about our fight to have the effects of 'Agent Orange' on Veterans and our offspring can be found on the national website:*

[www.vvfa.org.au:/AO The Official History.pdf](http://www.vvfa.org.au/AO%20The%20Official%20History.pdf)

3.. Why 2 Vietnam Veterans organisations ?

The birth of the Federation....

For several years between 1981 and 1989 there was an ill wind between the NSW Branch, the Victorian Branch and the National Executive of the VVAA. This was to come to a head when, after several attempts of mediation, the VVAA National Council refused to respond to questions put to a National Meeting, by the NSW President. Several more attempts were made, but without a proper response from the VVAA National Executive to some vital questions, the NSW Branch had to consider its position. With NSW having around half of the association's membership, it being the source of most of the associations documented arguments and with its interests and objectives being ignored, there seemed no choice.

Between 1979 and 1995 the NSW Branch had been at the forefront of most of the VVAA National Councils research and investigations on behalf of Vietnam Veterans. The fight to prove 'Agent Orange' affected not only those returning from Vietnam, but our offspring as well, is well documented on the VVFA (National) website.



Phill Thompson 1944-1986



Ray Fulton 1948-2008



Tim McCombe 1945-2015

The faces behind the Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia

Separate campaigns that saw VVCS offices created and Operation Life Programs established, (supported by all ESOs), flourished in the 1980s and 1990s. NSW successfully mounted AAT Hearings and High Court rulings that proved time and again that the DVA was deliberately denying veterans their just rights under the law. That they be given the benefit of all doubt when making claims.

In February 1995 at a general meeting, the NSW Branch chose to disassociate itself from the National Council of the VVAA. At a further meeting in July of 1995 interstate organisations also agreed to join with NSW and form a new national body calling itself the Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia, (VVF). South Australia, the ACT and Queensland, along with NSW became the founding member States. Between 1995 and 1981, with other States VVAA members becoming disenchanted, some of their number disaffiliated also and chose to join the Federation, so that by the end of 1982 we had increased State membership to include Victoria, Western Australia, and Tasmania.

Continuing the battles.....

Amid the upheaval within our ranks, a split with The Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia, and the unfortunate demise of prominent people within our ranks, we still manage to pull together, without faltering, or losing sight of our objectives. The story of what we needed to do, to force recognition, just compensation, and a justified application of our rights as should be applied to all service men and women. It is the true essence of the tenacity that made up the soldier of the day. The Vietnam Veteran.

Our strength to lobby government officials on matters relative to the Veteran community, as well as those still serving, is considerable. With sittings at round-table discussions with the government of the day we have been able to successfully seek a new research and history into the effects of Agent

Orange on Vietnam Veterans and their children. We have recently undertaken a raft of matters to government, including the closure of VAN offices, the threat against the VVCS, the attack on veteran pensioners, and the attempted reduction in soldiers superannuation, to name a few.

The fight never ends.

THE VIETNAM WAR AN AUSTRALIAN PESPECTIVE *END*

Thus, concludes the historical article within this publication.

Those wishing to avail themselves of a full copy of the paper may do so by downloading the pdf file on the New South Wales website at

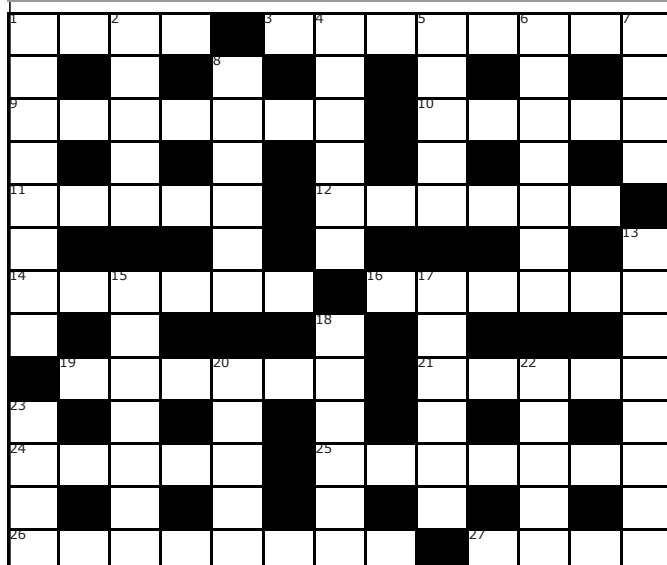
**[www.vvfagranville.org /](http://www.vvfagranville.org/)
THE VIETNAM WAR.pdf**

Anyone wishing to download and copy the article in other media are reminded of copyright protocols, with all sources of material therein attributed to the author, including images, maps, and graphics.

All contact with the author, regarding the article is to be via email to:

bobf@vvfagranville.org

CROSSWORD CORNER



ACROSS

1. Write with keyboard
3. Unexpected luck
9. Romantic
10. Speed in music
11. Contempt
12. Darker
14. Came after
16. Grab hold
19. Pet accessory
21. Small fish
24. Appropriately
25. Honour, conscience
26. Without music
27. Optics

DOWN

1. Swap across
2. Snapshot
4. Within
5. Fact
6. Part of Chair
7. Burgled goods
8. Ricochet
13. Window protectors
15. Reduce length
17. Radiance
18. Emergency
20. Trusty
22. Answer
23. Time gone by

Solution next issue

THE UNKNOWN COMIC

A young lady is having a bad day at the roulette tables at the Crown. She's down to her last \$50. Speaking out loud she says to the whole table, 'What rotten luck I've had today! What should I do?'

A man standing next to her suggests, 'I don't know, why don't you play your age?'

He walks away, but moments later, he hears a great commotion at the roulette table, and rushes back pushing his way through the crowd. The lady is lying limp on the floor, with the croupier kneeling over her. He asks, 'What happened? Is she all right?'

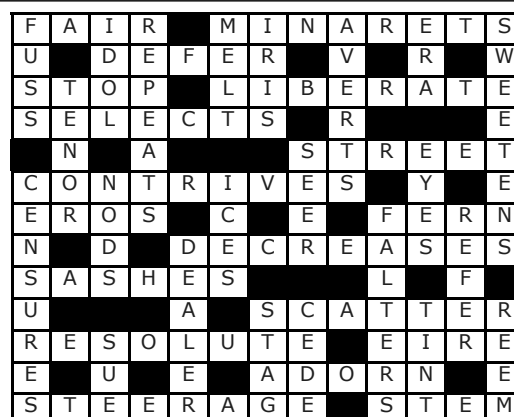
The croupier replies, 'I don't know. She put all her money on 22, but 36 came up, she just fainted!'

A priest, a minister, and a rabbi want to see who's best at his job. So they each go into the woods, find a bear, and attempt to convert it. Later they get together. The priest begins: "When I found the bear, I read to him from the Catechism and sprinkled him with holy water. Next week is his first communion." The minister says. "I found a bear by the stream, and preached God's holy word. The bear was so mesmerized that he let me baptise him." They both look down at the rabbi, who is lying on a gurney in a body cast. "Looking back," he says, "maybe I shouldn't have started with the circumcision."

I tried to explain to my 5-year-old grandson that it's perfectly normal to accidentally poop your pants, but he's still making fun of me.

The worst time to have a heart attack is during a game of charades.

JULY 2017
SOLUTION



VIETNAM VETERANS, PEACEKEEPERS & PEACEMAKERS
ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA (NSW BRANCH) INC.

2018 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - AGENDA

The 2018 Annual General Meeting of the Vietnam Veterans, Peacekeepers & Peacemakers Association of Australia (NSW Branch) Inc, will be held at the Merrylands RSL Club 10.30am Saturday, 26th May 2018.

AGENDA

Opening of Meeting by the Chairman
Apologies
Confirm the Minutes of the AGM 2017
Business Arising from the Minutes of the AGM 2017
President's Report
Treasurer's Report
Secretary's Report
Membership Report
Appointment of Association Auditors
Life Membership proposals
Other Business by leave of the Chairman
Close of Meeting

Any items for General Business **must** be in the hands of the Secretary by close up of business on **Tuesday, 1st May 2018**.

Please note that 2018 is not an election year, so voting for positions on the Committee is not required.

Next AGM to be held on a date to be confirmed during May 2019.

Ron O'Connor JP
Hon. Secretary
NSW Branch

Vietnam Veterans Day 2017.

The Vietnam Veterans Federation would like to thank the following organisations for their very generous donation of prizes in aid of our raffle on Vietnam Veterans Day, 18 August, 2017. Our very special thanks go to the Bankstown District Sports Club directors, management and staff for their ongoing valued and generous support.

With thanks also to, Bankstown District Sports Club, Bankstown RSL sub-branch, Bankstown RSL Community Club, Club Liverpool, Bunnings Crossroads, Cabravale Diggers, Bunnings Blacktown, Fairfield RSL, NSW State RSL Women's Auxiliary, Hong Ky Meat Wholesalers, Ingleburn RSL, VVPPA NSW, Granville, and 2 anonymous donors.

The combined generosity of these organisations enabled us to raise \$1,675.00 on the day and these funds will greatly assist us in providing the much needed assistance to not only Vietnam Veterans but Veterans of all conflicts.

Once again, thank you all.

Terry Corcoran
(Organizing Committee)



1300 924 522

Our programs

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

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

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

**91 Milton Street,
Ashfield NSW 2131**

&

**7 Blake Street,
Kogarah NSW 2217**

BRANCH LISTINGS NSW SUB-BRANCHES

BRANCH LISTINGS OTHER STATES



VVCS - Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service

A service founded by Vietnam veterans

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

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

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

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

VALE ROSS MANGANO 4 /9/1940 - 13/8/2017

Many of our readers who volunteer and visited the Granville office will remember Ross from the early 1980's. Sadly he passed away just prior to Vietnam Veterans Day, on 13th August 2017.

214075 PTE ROSS MANGANO was born in Sicily on 4 September 1940 and departed this life on 13 August 2017. On Monday 21 August he was farewelled at a well attended service at a Rookwood Crematorium by his large extended family, friends and former soldiers of B Company 1RAR (first tour).

Bob Cockerill – 6 Platoon B Company 1RAR and President of Chapter 11 173D Airborne Association delivered a eulogy, which in part recorded that Ross was posted to "B" Company 1RAR in 1961 based at Holsworthy N.S.W. After a downsizing to create 5 RAR, Ross found himself with the 'new' 6 Platoon, B Company, where he was joined by old mates Cpl 'Dasher' Wheatley and LCpl Terry Loftus.

After a short sojourn with 'B' Company in New Guinea during 1963, Ross and 1 RAR found themselves on the HMAS Sydney and Vietnam bound, arriving there in May 1965. He became a very skilled forward scout, but unfortunately, on 13 October Ross trod on a mine and was repatriated back to Australia on 15 October 1965. He had lost his left leg and his Army days were over.

The loss of a leg never slowed Ross down, to the extent that by 1980 he had a few holdings in property around Granville, NSW, and joined his old mate Terry Loftus, volunteering and helping out at the VVAA office at the back of a Granville RSL hall in Blaxcell street. At every meeting there he would be passing out pistachio nuts and leaving a trail of broken shells. It was always fun when Ross called by, for he was never short of a good yarn, or to impart a bit of knowledge.

As Bob Cockerill said in his eulogy, 'Vietnam Veterans copped it pretty hard from the public but we learned to live with that, Ross also had to learn to live with only one leg. He learned to live without it well. He did it with pride, He did it with the respect and friendship of his brothers in arms' - **RIP ROSS.**



Last Post





Last Post





Last Post





Last Post



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

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

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

Please consider leaving a bequest in your will

Every Veteran deserves a lifestyle and better treatment than is currently available. Every Veteran should be able to successfully attain their rights to pensions and just compensation.

Yet we still receive veterans unaware of their rights, what they may be entitled to, and where and how to apply or enter a claim.

Through your Will, you have the power to help us achieve our goals. Help surviving veterans, and those that follow them, to receive their true entitlements.

Through your Will you have the power to make a difference. Any gift you bequest to our Association, no matter how large or small, will assist a fellow veteran.

You don't need to be wealthy or have tens of thousands of dollars to make a difference to the lives of veterans and those who follow us. Many people leave amounts both large and small through their wills to our association.

Combined each amount assists our association to carry on the vital support network we provide to the veteran community.

OPERATION Life



REGISTER NOW!!

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

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

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

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



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

MEMBER DISCOUNTS

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

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152 Parramatta Rd
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Ph: 9519 1441
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On mechanical repairs & competitive prices on tyres and batteries.
To all Vietnam Veterans Federation Members.

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JOE CARE
603-605 Parramatta Rd
Leichhardt NSW
MTA Lic. # 42198

TRAILERS TOWBARS BULLBARS

Fastfit Bullbars & Towbars
Trailer sales and spares-side steps Bike beacons-Custom work
65 St Hilliers Road
AUBURN
Ph: (02) 9749 1209
10% Discount on products

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MENAI
Ph: (02) 9541 4720
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Balmain Radiator Centre
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22d Crystal St
ROZELLE
Ph: (02) 9818 4920
Mbl: 0419 417 206
10% Discount

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Wreck-A-Mended Smash Repairs
Unit 1, 20 Bosci Rd
Ingleburn NSW
02 9605 9008
Ask for Alan
Tell them you are a member and they will send us a donation

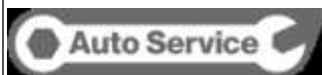
MOTOR CYCLE ACCESSORIES

Motor Cycle Accessories Supermarket
Head Office.
321 Parramatta Rd
Auburn NSW
(02) 9648 1400
www.mcas.com.au

CITY: 9261 5182.
LIVERPOOL: 9601 8276.
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