



DEBRIEF

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HONOUR THE DEAD, But Fight like Hell for the Living

NATIONAL PRESIDENTS REPORT

The past year has been one that I thought was going to be a bit slower and less eventful, be careful what you wish for? Not that I am complaining, I realised some time ago that one has to be flexible and prepared for almost anything.

My usual response has been to make sure I understand what is needed, look for support, firstly from within our association but also the wider resources available.

A number of highlights from the year include;

Progress in the Advocacy Training and Development Program and a realisation that our volunteer base in this area is not as active as I believed.

The ever expanding use of technology available to provide services to our members.

The involvement I have had in the planning of the commemorative activities of the 50th anniversary of the Battles of Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral in May 2018.

The ongoing opportunities to meet with Department of Veterans Affairs executives and staff and other organisations within the veteran community to identify and resolve problems and disputes.

The opportunity I had to present an argument on behalf of Vietnam veterans at the Defence Honours and Awards Tribunal.

Most of all I feel honoured to have been able to meet and discuss matters of concern with members of our association, the opportunity to serve our association and to contribute, in a small way, to the wellbeing of our veteran community.

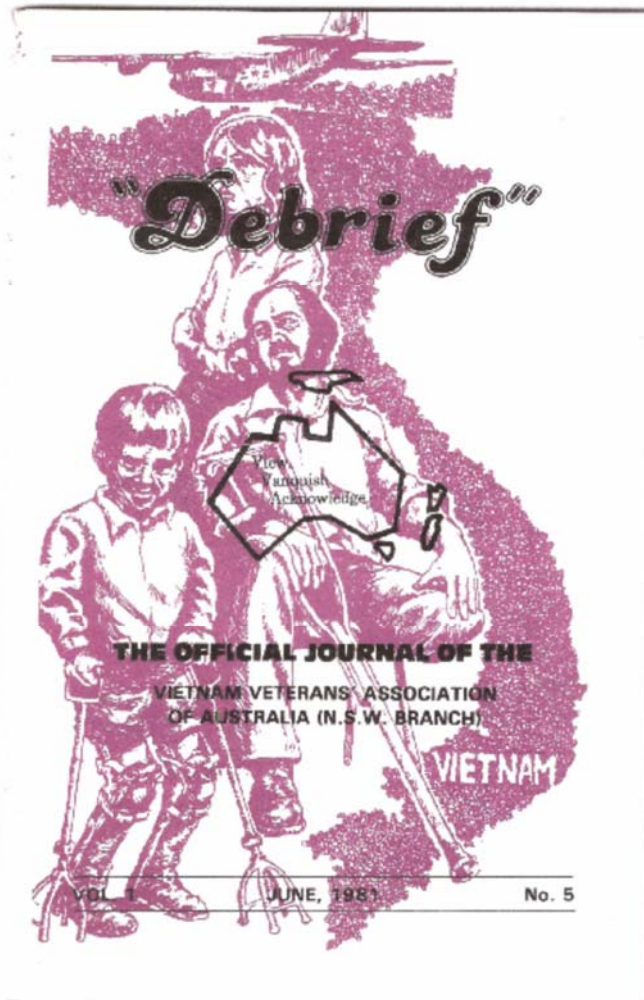
I must pay tribute to our national executive and the state branch presidents for their advice and support through the year, to my wife and family who accept my regular disappearance for a day or so at a time and support my commitment to our cause.

To all our members, thank you for your service, your commitment as serving men and women and now as members of the veteran community. May I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year in 2018.

Ken Foster

National President

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OUR HISTORY

The cover page of an edition of Debrief Volume 1 No 5 of June 1981 published by the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia (NSW Branch).

A number of copies of editions between 1982 and 1992 have also been located.

A copy of Volume 1 No 1 would be a great addition to our records as would any other old copies.

Contact the Editor on debrief@vva.org.au if you can help

Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VVCS) and Veterans Line

24 hours a day across Australia for crisis support and free and confidential counselling.

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Continuing Professional Development – the new ‘refresher’

Welfare and Compensation Officers and Advocates have always kept their knowledge up-to-date by attending refresher training – usually face-to-face foundation or add-on courses at the advocate’s current level.

The ATDP is introducing a new system to ensure military advocates have the latest skills and knowledge:

Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

Like all ATDP training, CPD is a contemporary learning practice. It is designed to ensure that advocates continue to provide the high-quality service that current and former ADF members and their families expect and deserve.

CPD is a points-based system – just like those used by engineers, accountants and many other professions.

Points are earned through a range of activities, such as online quizzes, attending special courses and watching video tutorials. All options are designed to reinforce and grow knowledge and skills.

The program will give advocates the greatest flexibility in what they do, and how and when they do it – online at home, or at a conference or seminar. It is tailored to suit practitioners at each level in either welfare or compensation.

Advocates will discover that acquiring points won’t take more time out of their schedule than the old system, and they will be able to say with confidence to their insurer, to their authorising organisation and to their clients that their knowledge is ‘current’.

The CPD program is expected to be rolled out in the first half of 2018.

There will be a comprehensive program of information sessions and training programs before the system comes online



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QUT **AT EASE** **PTSD COACH AUSTRALIA**

This research is funded by the Department of Veterans' Affairs

An Arizona Department of Safety Officer pulled over a sedan owner for a faulty tail-light. When the officer approached the driver, the lady behind the wheel handed the officer her driver's license, insurance card and a concealed weapon carry permit.

The officer took all the documents, looked them over and said. "Mrs. Smith, I see you have a CCP. Do you have any weapons with you?"

The lady replied, "Yes sir, I have a 357 handgun in a hip holster, a .45 in the glove box and a .22 derringer in my shoe."

The officer looked at the driver and asked, "Anything else?"

"Yes sir, I have a Mossberg 500 12 gauge and an AR-15 behind the seat."



The officer asked if the lady was driving to or from a shooting range and the lady said she wasn't, so the officer bent over and looked into the driver's face and said "Mrs. Smith, you're carrying quite a few guns. May I ask what you are afraid of?"

Mrs. Smith locked eyes with the officer and calmly answered, "Not a damned thing!"

\$31 million in additional funding for veteran mental health

The Government will provide an additional \$31 million to support veterans' mental health as part of its response to the Senate Inquiry into veterans' suicide.

As the Prime Minister has said, we best honour the diggers of 1917 by ensuring our veterans in 2017 receive the support they need and deserve. When someone stops serving their country it is their country's turn to start serving them.

The Turnbull Government has made veterans mental health a priority. An additional \$58.6 million in mental health funding was provided in this year's Budget.

The Turnbull Government commits an additional \$31 million to support veterans as part of its response to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Reference's committee report *The Constant Battle: Suicide by veterans*.

The Government will provide:

\$16.1 million over four years for a new Veteran Payment for financial vulnerable veterans claiming mental health conditions;

\$7.1 million over four years to extend support for families of veterans;

\$2.1 million over four years for an annual health assessment for ex-serving ADF members for the first five years post-discharge;

\$4.0 million over two years to pilot a case management service for transitioning or recently discharged ADF members;

\$1.7 million over two years to undertake a scoping study to professionalise veterans' advocacy.

The Government has agreed to 22 of the 24 recommendations made in the Senate committee report and agreed-in-principle to the remaining two recommendations.

The Government has asked the Productivity Commission and the Australian National Audit Office to conduct reviews into the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA). These independent reviews will inform further improvements to DVA processes.

Other recommendations the Government has agreed to complement work already undertaken by the Government to further support veterans, such as:

The \$166.6 million investment in the veteran centric reform program announced in this year's budget;

The Prime Minister's Veterans' Employment Program launched in November last year;

The Government's response to the National Mental Health Commission Review into the Suicide and Self Harm Prevention Services released in June 2017;

The ongoing Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reports into the incidence of suicide among serving and ex-serving ADF personnel.

The Government is continuing to focus on improving the mental health services provided to our veterans. Mental health treatment works best when a veteran can get help early so the Government has made the treatment of any mental health condition free for anyone who has served one day in the fulltime ADF. The Government will now provide a DVA White Card to access mental health treatment through this program to all personnel leaving the military.

The Government would like to thank the members of the committee for their substantial work to complete this report and for their passion for improving mental health outcomes for veterans.

OUR MILITARY HISTORY

The Vietnam War

The Vietnam War was the longest twentieth century conflict in which Australians participated; it involved some 60,000 personnel and grew from a limited initial commitment of 30 military advisers in 1962 to include a battalion in 1965 and finally, in 1966, a task force. Each of the three services was involved, but the dominant role was played by the Army. After the cessation of combat operations in 1972, a limited number of Australian personnel remained in Vietnam, and elements of the RAAF returned in 1975, carrying out evacuations and assisting refugees almost until the moment of South Vietnam's surrender.

In the early years Australia's participation in the war was not widely opposed. But as the commitment grew, as conscripts began to make up a large percentage of those being deployed and killed, and as the public increasingly came to believe that the war was being lost, opposition grew until, in the early 1970s, more than 200,000 people marched in the streets of Australia's major cities in protest.

By this time the United States Government had embarked on a policy of 'Vietnamisation' - withdrawing its own troops from the country while passing responsibility for the prosecution and conduct of the war to South Vietnamese forces. Australia too was winding down its commitment and the last combat troops came home in March 1972. The RAAF, however, sent personnel back to Vietnam in 1975 to assist in evacuations and humanitarian work during the war's final days. Involvement in the war cost more than 500 Australian servicemen their lives, while some 3,000 were wounded, otherwise injured or were victims of illness.

The South Vietnamese fought on for just over three years before the capital, Saigon, fell to North Vietnamese forces in April 1975, bringing an end to the war which by then had spilled over into neighbouring Cambodia and Laos. Millions lost their lives, millions more were made refugees and the disaster that befell the region continues to reverberate today. For Australia the Vietnam War was the cause of the greatest social and political dissent since the conscription referenda of the First World War.

If you would prefer to have this publication emailed directly to you please forward your email address to the National Secretary at secretary@vva.org.au.

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THE WAR WIDOWS GUILD OF AUSTRALIA

“We all belong to each other. We all need each other. It is in serving each other and in sacrificing for our common good that we are finding our true life.”



A strong part of the Guilds History is the origins of its Logo.

The kookaburra was adopted as the Guilds Logo from its early inception and remains today.

The Kookaburra is also present on all War Widows' Guild Badges.

REUNIONS

REUNION - SAPPER ASSOCIATION QUEENSLAND

Holdfast 2018 Bundaberg 4 to 7 May 2018

All ex RAE members welcome

Secretary John Jesser

07 3356 9297 email: johnjesser@iinet.net.au



50TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATIONS.

BATTLES OF FIRE SUPPORT BASES CORAL AND BALMORAL

ANZAC PARADE CANBERRA 13 MAY 2018

VETERANS OF THE BATTLE WISHING TO ATTEND THE COMMEMORATIONS AND GOVERNMENT RECEPTION ARE INVITED TO REGISTER THEIR INTEREST WITH THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT

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Future listing of these facilities should be available on the various VVAA State branch web sites and these can be accessed through the web site www.vvaa.org.au



HAVE YOUR SAY— LETTERS TO DEBRIEF ARE WELCOME

The subject matter should be generally of interest to Vietnam Veterans and their families. Brief, to the point letters have a better chance of publication. Photographs should be of good colour, quality and subject matter, in jpg or similar format. Text should be submitted in Word format with minimum formatting. Vietnam Veteran writers must identify themselves by name, state, Vietnam Unit and Tour dates. Email: debrief@vvaa.org.au



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Quick

Accessing mental health support, abuse compensation made simpler

Are you struggling to cope because of something that happened to you in the Australian Defence Force (ADF)?

All current and former members of the ADF who have at least one day continuous full-time service, including Reservists, are able to access treatment for any mental health condition. The condition does not have to be related to ADF service and a diagnosis is not required.

To access treatment, call 1800 555 254 or email nlhc@dva.gov.au.

The Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service also provides the veteran community and their families with specialist free counselling and group programs.

This service is available at all times by phoning 1800 011 046, or via its website at www.vvcs.gov.au.

If your condition relates to having been sexually or physically abused while serving, DVA has introduced measures that may make it simpler for you to access compensation and to receive the mental health support you need.

DVA has broadened the use of statutory declarations as part of abuse compensation claims, making it possible for such a declaration to constitute sufficient evidence to establish that abuse took place, in some instances.

For example, if you were abused before 11 April 2011 and you were a child at the time, a statutory declaration alone will now be sufficient to establish that an abuse event occurred (provided that there is no contradictory evidence).

Please note, however, that if you were an adult at the time of the abuse, or the abuse took place after 11 April 2011, supporting evidence will also be required in addition to a statutory declaration. A statutory declaration in these instances will be taken as strong evidence in favour of the claim.

Claims will be determined on the basis of all available evidence.

These changes make it easier to prove that abuse occurred, if it was not reported at the time. This change will benefit those who may not have reported abuse at the time it occurred or may never have previously spoken about it.

DVA has established dedicated teams to manage all new claims relating to sexual and physical abuse, ensuring that all claims are managed with sensitivity and discretion.

CAVALRY MEN VIET NAM

Remember the Cavalry men standing tall
It was the call to arms that awaited them all
Fine young men, Aussie's all
With a love of their flag, country and Corp
Black Berets always worn
Silver buttons did adorn

Their noble steeds were not of flesh
But of castings made to mesh
With tracks instead of hoofs these carriers could run
Crews at one with an APC and its guns

Their hands were firm and hearts true
The Cavalry men that rode within
Part of the legend, Scorpions that sting

The enemy new the apocalypse would fall
Cavalry men were ready when an enemy's bugle called
Fear controlled by a job to be done
One with their mates, all in for one

Memories have faded with time gone by
Never let the truth be questioned or tried
Young men too brave to worry that they could fall
Sadly, some courageously, gave it all.

Mothers know that their fallen sons past every test
Their boys rode with courage and a heart full of zest
History must show that these were not boys
But Anzac men, best of the best

When the sun sets and the day comes to rest
Old Cavalry men will remember when they served with the best
And of friends and foe brave souls all
They will never forget mates at rest

But the Cavalry man no matter the age
Will always remember in awe, when he hears that familiar roar
Of his beast and its heart of steel and strength in its very core
And an old mans love still rides within, as it always will be one with
him

So let it be known far and wide
That with pride and unshameful heart
The Cavalry man, will never forget his part

Integrity!



A older golfer was chipping his ball from near a water hazard and his club fell into the water.

When he cried out, the Lord appeared and asked, "Why are you crying?"

The golfer replied that his club had fallen into water, and he needed the club to win the tournament to supplement his meager pension.

The Lord went down into the water and reappeared with a golden club. "Is this your club?" the Lord asked. The golfer replied, "No."

The Lord again went down and came up with a silver club. "Is this your club?" the Lord asked. Again, the golfer replied, "No."

The Lord went down again and came up with an iron club. "Is this your club?" the Lord asked. The golfer replied, "Yes."

The Lord was pleased with the golfer's honesty and gave him all three clubs to keep, and the golfer went home happy.

Sometime later the golfer was walking with his wife along the water hazard, and she fell into the river. When he cried out, the Lord again appeared and asked him, "Why are you crying?"

"Oh Lord, my woman has fallen into the water!"

The Lord went down into the water and came up with Kate Upton. "Is this your woman?" the Lord asked.

"Yes," cried the golfer. The Lord was furious. "You lied! That is an untruth!"

The golfer replied, "Oh, forgive me Lord. It is a misunderstanding. You see, if I had said 'no' to Kate Upton, You would have come up with Jennifer Anniston. Then if I said 'no' to her, you would have come up with my woman. Had I then said 'yes,' you would have given me all three. And Lord, I am an old man not able to take care of all three women in a way that they deserve, that's why I said yes to Kate Upton."

And God was pleased.