

# Veterans Voice

Northern Suburbs Veterans  
Support Centre Inc.

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Edition 1 – Volume 2

## THE GOOD OIL – THE GOLD CARD

Eligibility for the Repatriation Health Card – for all conditions (GOLD) continues to be a confusing and often contentious issue. Unfortunately there are a myriad of stories and myths about the “GOOD OLD GOLD CARD”, who’s eligible and what the entitlements are!



When eligibility is confirmed, the GOLD CARD is issued and its benefits become apparent, there is a great deal of satisfaction and joy.

Unfortunately for those who haven't qualified yet or don't qualify the myths seem to go on and sadly it causes a great deal of anxiety and stress.

A Gold Card is issued to Veterans of Australia's Defence Force (ADF) who:

(Under the auspices of the Veterans' Entitlement Act):

- Are ex-prisoners of war;
- Receive a Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) disability pension of 100%;
- Are entitled to the Intermediate Rate of DVA disability pension;
- Are entitled to the Extreme Disability Adjustment Rate of DVA disability pension commonly referred to as the “EDA” pension;
- Are entitled to the DVA Special Rate of disability pension commonly referred to as the “TPI” pension;

- Receive a DVA disability pension of 50% or more who are also in receipt of any amount of a DVA Service Pension;
- Receive a DVA disability pension plus an additional allowance under Section 27 of the VEA for specific service related amputations or blindness in at least one eye;
- Receive a DVA service pension but whose other income and/or assets are below certain prescribed limits;
- Are World War 2 Returned Servicewomen of Australia's Defence Force (ADF) who have “qualifying service” as defined under the VEA;
- All Veterans of ADF including Australian Mariners who are aged 70 years and over who have “qualifying service” as a result of their service during World War 2.
- As of 1 July 2002, all Australian Defence Force Veterans who are aged 70 years and over who have had “qualifying service” in conflicts post World War 2.

## Rabble to Heroes Via RSM's

So many fond memories of warriors from  
yesterday

Characters with sharp wit and ready to serve  
wherever the fray

They came from all walks of life and so different  
with many views

Swore the oath together yet about each other had  
not a clue

Drilled by a mad RSM and others not blessed with  
mothers it seemed

Bugle calls; hurry up and wait; do it again and no  
time to dream

Weary bodies, gasping, faltering; “idle soldier,  
take his name”

“Oright, you bloody rabble, not good enough, let's  
do it again”

Time passed and the rabble finally became a  
team

Confident, alert, all stood tall and were tough and  
mean

They now respected and trusted each other  
The madness of the army had made them  
brothers.

On operations they adapted to the uncertainty in  
war

Always good humour, decisive, daring and so  
much more

In an historic battle against huge odds, they won  
the day

Such a testing time, yet to strangers they  
shrugged with little to say

I can still hear their curses, laughter and song  
Always together, sharing and caring; more so  
when all went wrong

To this “once upon a time rabble” the RSM finally  
did tell

“How proud I am that you young bloody heroes  
did so well”

Today the names of some are etched on sacred  
granite walls

These and others since gone are not forgotten as  
the bugle calls

Their ranks are thinning quickly now and soon  
there will be none

Yet history will tell of their love of country and duty  
proudly done

George Mansford©September2015

- Were granted the DVA disability pension for pulmonary tuberculosis before 2 November 1978.

(Under the auspices of the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004):

- Are former Members of the ADF who are entitled to the Special Rate of Disability Pension known as the “SRDP”, even if they have not chosen that pension;
- Are former Members of the ADF with a rating of 60 or more impairment points for DVA accepted disabilities;
- Are former members of the ADF with a rating of 30 or more impairment points for DVA accepted disabilities and are receiving any amount of service pension from the VEA but whose income and assets are below certain prescribed limits; and
- Former Members of the ADF who are 70 years of age and over who have rendered “warlike service” on or after 1 July 2004.

(Under the auspices of the Safety Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988):

The Department has only recently issued treatment cards similar to the VEA and MRCA systems for this Act however there is no provision to issue a Gold Card (TPI) at this stage.

### **Dependents of Veterans**

Certain dependents of veterans are also eligible for a “GOLD CARD” if they are:

- Under the VEA, War widows/ widowers and eligible dependents of a deceased Veteran if the veteran’s death has been accepted as service related;
- As at 1 July 2008 under the VEA, a war widow whose partner was in receipt of Temporary Special Rate (TTI) and/ or Intermediate Rate of Pensions (IR) at the time of their death;
- Under the VEA, a child of a deceased veteran whose death was not war-caused and who had operational service, if the child is

not being cared for by the remaining parent;

- Under the VEA, an invalid son or daughter of a deceased veteran whose death has been accepted as war-caused, who had treatment before 6 June 1985. (Please note that special criteria applies in these cases and the entitlement is not guaranteed);
- Under the VEA, a widowed mother or widowed step-mother that was dependent on an unmarried deceased veteran whose death has been accepted as war-caused who had a treatment entitlement before 6 June 1985. Please note that special criteria applies in these cases and the entitlement is not guaranteed;
- Under the MRCA, A wholly dependent partner of a serving or former ADF member whose is entitled to compensation for the member’s death on or after the 1 Jul 2004; and
- Under the MRCA, an “eligible young person” being the son, daughter and/ or a dependent child of a serving or former ADF Member who is entitled to compensation for the member’s death on or after 1 Jul 2004. Note that an eligible young person must be either less than 16 years of aged or between 16 and 25 and undertaking full-time study and not full time employment at the time of the Member’s death.

### **PLEASE NOTE:**

That when a veteran, former member, widow/ widower/ partner, cadet or reservist passes away, that person’s “GOLD CARD” is not automatically transferred to the surviving partner or any other dependent. Widows, widowers, partners and other dependents who fall into the categories above would receive their own “GOLD CARD” once they apply and their entitlement is established.

### **Commonwealth and Allied Veterans**

Some veterans of Commonwealth and/or Allied Forces with qualifying

service are eligible for a “GOLD CARD” if they are:

- A veteran who served with a Commonwealth and/ or allied force during World War 2 or in specified operational areas after World War 2 and were domiciled in Australia immediately prior to enlistment in the Commonwealth and/ or Allied Force; or
- A mariner who served on a Commonwealth or Allied ship during World War 2, if they or their dependants were residing in Australia for at least 12 months immediately prior to the commencement of their service on that ship.

### **Can I lose Eligibility for the “GOLD CARD”?**

- It is possible to lose eligibility for the “GOLD CARD” if your eligibility depends on anything that may change such as financial status/ payments, impairment ratings, age or living arrangements; or
- If your eligibility for the “GOLD CARD” depends on something that cannot change, such as your past service, your widow(er)/partner status, blindness or amputations, then it cannot be affected.

***Please note that the information contained in this article is only an overview and is no way complete nor should it be used as an authority. It is strongly recommended that for further information and advice on this matter that you contact DVA staff and seek their assistance. More information can also be obtained from the DVA website and their Factsheets, in particular Factsheet No HSV59 “Eligibility for the Repatriation Health Card – for All Conditions (Gold)”.***

### **UNIDENTIFIED SOLDIER LAID TO REST**

AN unknown Australian soldier has been buried with full military honours in Indonesia, 73 years after he fell fighting Japanese forces in West Timor during World War II.



HIS remains were found in 2013 during excavations for a school near Kupang but despite the best efforts of the Australian army's unrecovered war casualties unit he could not be identified.

He was laid to rest in the Australian Army section of the Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery in Ambon, Indonesia, on Thursday.

It's thought he was a member of the 1400-strong "Sparrow Force", most of whose members were killed or captured in February 1942 as they mounted a spirited but ultimately futile defence against overwhelming Japanese numbers.

With the soldier's remains were found items of army equipment of the type issued to soldiers at the start of the war. That included mess tins and the fittings from a webbing belt and haversack.

Also found were personal items including a comb, watch and some Dutch coins.

But none were marked with a name or serial number.

The Unrecovered War Casualties Unit took a DNA sample and compared it against samples from 93 people but none proved a match.

Assistant defence minister Stuart Robert said it was to identify and commemorate those who lost their lives in war and in the defence of the nation.

"While we do not know him by name, we can take comfort that after 73 years this soldier has finally been laid to rest with his mates," he said in a statement.

### **AN EXPLANATION OF THE SYRIAN CONFLICT**

President Assad (who is bad) is a nasty guy who got so nasty his people rebelled and the Rebels (who are good) started winning.

But then some of the rebels turned a bit nasty and are now called Islamic State (who are definitely bad) and some continued to support democracy (who are still good).

So the Americans (who are good) started bombing Islamic State (who are bad) and giving arms to the Syrian Rebels (who are good) so they could fight Assad (who is still bad) which was good.

By the way, there is a breakaway state in the north run by the Kurds who want to fight IS (which is a good thing) but the Turkish authorities think they are bad, so we have to say they are bad whilst secretly thinking they're good and giving them guns to fight IS (which is good) but that is another matter.

Getting back to Syria. President Putin (bad, as he invaded Crimea and the Ukraine and killed lots of folks including that nice Russian man in London with polonium) has decided to back Assad (who is still bad) by attacking IS (who are also bad) which is sort of a good thing?

But Putin (still bad) thinks the Syrian Rebels (who are good) are also bad, and so he bombs them too, much to the annoyance of the Americans (who are good) who are busy backing and arming the rebels (who are also good).

Now Iran (who used to be bad, but now they have agreed not to build any nuclear weapons and bomb Israel are now good) are going to provide ground troops to support Assad (still bad) as are the Russians (bad) who now have ground troops and aircraft in Syria.

So a Coalition of Assad (still bad) Putin (extra bad) and the Iranians (good, but in a bad sort of way) are going to attack IS (who are bad) which is a good thing, but also the Syrian Rebels (who are good) which is bad.

Now the British (obviously good, except Corbyn who is probably bad) and the Americans (also good) cannot attack Assad (still bad) for fear of upsetting Putin (bad) and Iran (good / bad) and now they have to accept that Assad might not be that

bad after all compared to IS (who are super bad).

So Assad (bad) is now probably good, being better than IS (no real choice there) and since Putin and Iran are also fighting IS that may now make them good. America (still good) will find it hard to arm a group of rebels being attacked by the Russians for fear of upsetting Mr Putin (now good) and that mad ayatollah in Iran (also good) and so they may be forced to say that the Rebels are now bad, or at the very least abandon them to their fate. This will lead most of them to flee to Turkey and on to Europe or join IS (still the only constantly bad group).

To Sunni Muslims, an attack by Shia Muslims (Assad and Iran) backed by Russians will be seen as something of a Holy War, and the ranks of IS will now be seen by the Sunnis as the only Jihadis fighting in the Holy War and hence many Muslims will now see IS as good (doh!).

Sunni Muslims will also see the lack of action by Britain and America in support of their Sunni rebel brothers as something of a betrayal (might have a point) and hence we will be seen as bad.

So now we have America (now bad) and Britain (also bad) providing limited support to Sunni Rebels (bad) many of whom are looking to IS (good / bad) for support against Assad (now good) who, along with Iran (also good) and Putin (also, now, unbelievably, good) are attempting to retake the country Assad used to run before all this started?

I hope that this clears it all up for you!

### **UPDATE – BILL RITCHIE**

Things are moving ever forward but slowly in relation to the special purpose vehicle for one of our clients namely Bill Ritchie (Vietnam Veteran – RAA).

To date we have raised \$4000.00 towards the new vehicle which is not nearly enough however, the good news is that the Department of Veterans' Affairs has agreed and indeed arranged for a brand new vehicle to be given to Bill's family.

The vehicle is currently on its way from South Australia and is expected to be here within the next 7 – 10 days and on arrival will be accepted on his behalf by Ms Joanne Beavis a long term friend of both Bill and Michelle.

Unfortunately Michelle had a recent accident that resulted in her breaking her femur and as a result is currently in Joondalup Hospital and will remain there for approximately 5 – 6 weeks. In the meantime Bill has been placed in an acute respite centre “Anchorage Aged Care” in Mindarie.

As DVA has agreed to provide the vehicle the \$4000.00 raised through donations will be given to the family to ensure that the vehicle is insured with the remaining funds being allocated to a pre-paid fuel card so that the family is not lumbered with fuel costs for the next 12 months. I hope that this is satisfactory to all those that donated.

If those that donated do not agree with this action can they please let me know so that a refund of their donation can be made.

For those that do agree please accept our most sincere thanks for your kind donation, it is great to see the Veteran Community coming together to help another Veteran in need.

### **TROOPS LOCKED UP AND TREATED RAISING MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS**



Decorated former Infantry Sergeant Matthew McKeever told a Senate Inquiry into mental health about the

shocking treatment of damaged soldiers.

A VETERAN of the war in Afghanistan has accused the army of treating him like an animal and locking him in a cell after he admitted to serious mental health concerns.

Decorated former Infantry Sergeant Matthew McKeever provided a Senate Inquiry into mental health with a graphic first-hand account of problems faced by many damaged veterans who were labelled “malingerers” if they spoke up.

The veteran of two tours told senators in Brisbane today that he killed his first enemy fighter in August 2010 and was then forced to retrieve the body and fingerprint it.

When handling enemy bodies his own fingers went through the holes shot in the wrist of an enemy fighter.

In another case he was forced to deal with dead children and to actually shake a child to prove to its parents that it was dead.

“As soon as you speak up you are treated like an animal,” Mr. McKeever said.

“I was put in a cell ... and they [army] try and push you over the limit.

“I gave 16 years ... and get treated like a dog.”

The veteran has numerous physical injuries and severe Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and has attempted suicide.

The 34-year-old suffers from impotence and sexual activity can trigger nightmares.

He has to inject his penis to physically have sex.

“I haven’t slept with my wife for 12 months due to the nightmares,” Mr. McKeever said.

Another Afghanistan veteran Ciaran Hemmings, who served with the 6th Battalion, told the inquiry he was told by one officer that he was a waste of taxpayer dollars and an “oxygen thief” because he was injured.

Meanwhile a leading military compensation lawyer used the inquiry to launch a scathing attack on the Department of Veterans Affairs,

labelling it “chaotic, frustrating, inefficient and inept.”

Brian Briggs from law firm Slater and Gordon told the Senate Inquiry into the mental health of troops that the DVA operated in a siloed and rule-bound culture.

“If the DVA did its job properly I wouldn’t have a job,” he said.

Mr. Briggs has represented dozens of veterans in their lengthy battles with DVA and he wants the department to follow a time based claim system that applies overseas.

He said veterans in both the UK and the US were protected by strict time frames when making compensation claims.

If the time frame was exceeded the claim was approved automatically.

### **ON THE MOVE**

After a recent meeting with the CEO (Mr. Daniel Simms) and the Mayor (Mrs. Tracey Roberts) of the City of Wanneroo the Northern Suburbs Veterans Support Centre was offered the temporary use of a house owned by the City in which to conduct the operations of the NSVSC as well as expanding the services offered.

The City has been a strong supporter of the NSVSC since inception by offering it an office in which to operate, unfortunately it has outgrown this facility and needed to look elsewhere.

Once again the City of Wanneroo came to the party offering the house situated next to the City’s Works Depot on Wanneroo Road Ashby.

Further, it has offered to look at providing a 1000 m<sup>2</sup> plot of land on which to build a purpose built Veterans facility within its boundary.

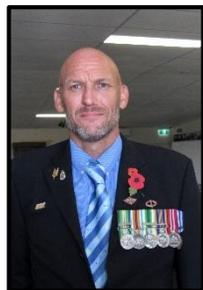
The object is for the NSVSC to manage the facility and to allow other Veteran focused groups to utilize the resources within the building, in other words a “One Stop Veteran Shop” that will provide support to the veteran community within the City of Wanneroo.

Many thanks to the City of Wanneroo for its ongoing support to not only the NSVSC but to the Veteran Community at large.

Once the agreement has been ratified by the Council it is expected that the move will occur over the Christmas break (with a bit of luck).

If any Veteran out there has any experience in painting, carpentry, gardening or any other household renovation experience please contact the NSVSC as we could certainly use your help – contact [admin@nsvsc.org.au](mailto:admin@nsvsc.org.au).

### REMEMBRANCE DAY 2015



The Secretary of the NSVSC Mr. Richard Doorne was asked to address the Quinns Rocks RSL Sub Branch Remembrance

Day Commemorative Service on the 11<sup>th</sup> November 2015.

Instead of the normal speeches usually connected with commemorating the service of Veterans throughout the ages Mr. Doorne emphasized the battles faced by Veterans once they returned home and were discharged from the military.

His comments hit home to every Veteran attending as it highlighted the problems facing those injured when dealing with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

His speech sent a clear message to both the Government and Department that they both need to lift their game and do more for those Veterans who come home from operations battle scarred and mentally injured.

Well done Richard, you are a true Veterans Advocate.

### SOMETHING NEW - MRCA

During a recent interview with a female client it was highlighted that under the **Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004** there is a provision for unintended consequence of medical treatment suffered by members of the ADF.

It includes a concept of acceptance of liability for injury or disease that was

the unintended consequence of medical treatment obtained under the Defence Regulations or MRCA.

This is an extension of a provision that was first introduced in the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988 (SRCA) in 1994. Section 6A of SRCA deemed an injury that was the unintended consequence of medical treatment obtained at Commonwealth expense to have arisen out of or in the course of employment.

Former members who have a Gold Card for treatment under MRCA are entitled to be treated for any injury or disease, whether it is a service injury or disease or not. However, Sect 29 will not apply if the person is treated for a non-service injury or disease under MRCA.

What is a consequence?

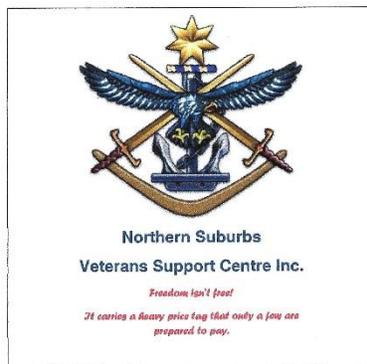
If “X” is a “consequence” of “Y”, then “X” has been caused by “Y”. If an injury or disease is a consequence of treatment, it must have been caused by the treatment, and not merely be an injury or disease that arose during or in the course of treatment. Causation must be established in the “balance of probabilities”.

For more information please see your Advocate or email [admin@nsvsc.org.au](mailto:admin@nsvsc.org.au).

### NSVSC CAR STICKERS

NSVSC Car stickers are now available from the Office – Cost is \$2.00 per sticker.

Please support the NSVSC.



Other items, including mugs, baseball caps, polo tops, pens and assorted stuff will be available shortly.

### PARIS TERRORIST ATTACKS

The Executive Committee of the Northern Suburbs Veterans Support Centre extends sincere condolences to those innocent victims of the terrorist attacks that occurred in Paris on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> November 2015.

We sincerely hope that those injured recover fully to lead long and meaningful lives.

To the perpetrators of such a cowardly attack may you rot in hell!

### PARLIAMENTARIAN SUPPORT FOR VETERANS – NON-EXISTENT

I do not particularly care for Politicians as they are all tarred with the same brush but from time to time one actually stands up and makes a statement for Veterans and this was the case on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2015 when Jaquie Lambie presented a Bill in the Senate.

Her speech can be found here:

<http://senatorlambie.com.au/2015/11/veterans-entitlements-amendment-expanded-gold-card-access-bill-2015/>

In it she says:

“An unprecedented veterans’ suicide and homelessness crisis grips Australia today.

This crisis was created because of poor management of Australia’s military resources and defence personnel – by successive governments.”

During a meeting of veterans that was organised Dr Raymond Huntley at Burpengary, Queensland on Wednesday the 21<sup>st</sup> of May 2014 where it was identified that two veterans had to wait over ten years to access the medical benefits that the coverage of a Health Gold card gives.

After Dr Huntley had finished that exercise – which in reality was for the benefit of myself and two other Liberal politicians, a former digger who had served in the Middle East spoke to the group. He had a tragic story.

He said a number of his comrades that he’d served with in war in the Middle East had taken their own lives. And one of the main reasons, he said – which had pushed his veteran

friends to take that terrible decision to kill themselves – was the psychological harm that occurred to his mates while they fought the Government to obtain a Gold Card.

He said words that must hurt some public servants who are very dedicated to their jobs and take pride in their work – but nonetheless must be spoken in the debate.

The Middle East veteran said that many of his friends would have preferred to fight the Taliban, rather than fight the bureaucrats who decided whether our Diggers received the best possible medical care that Australia can provide to her wounded warriors.

When it was pointed out that it was the bureaucratic fight for a Health Gold Card that was significantly contributing to the suicides of our veterans it became clear that something needed to be done and done fast.

Today we have a Prime Minister, Minister for Defence and Minister for Veterans' Affairs who cannot tell the people of Australia how many of the 70,000 contemporary cohort of veterans, have taken their own lives – or are forced to live rough among our homeless.

Our veterans' suicide rate, intentionally kept secret by all major political parties and senior military commanders to protect their reputations, is a national disgrace and shame.

A major cause of Australia's obscene veterans' suicide rate (apart from systemic under-resourcing and over-commitment to international operations) is the unnecessary psychological damage caused during our veterans' bureaucratic fight for Gold Card guaranteed medical treatment.

When you look at the video of Senator Lambie making her speech you will notice that the Senate Chamber is devoid of the majority of Members.

Apart from Senator Lambie the only other Senator that I saw was the Speaker and that was because he had to be there!

Politicians are all too quick to jump on the Veteran Bandwagon on ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day spruiking support left right and centre but when it comes to actually doing something they are noticeable by their absence.

If the speech had been about Politicians rights to free medical then it would have been standing room only. Is it any wonder that Politicians are held in such low esteem?

### **LEADERSHIP MISSING – THE RSL**

The National leadership of the RSL has failed again. Its failure to effectively and positively represent its membership and the broader Australian defence community was exposed at the recent Senate Inquiry into the Veterans' Affairs Legislation Amendment (2015) Budget Measures Bill 2015 where the National President Ken Doolan was wrong footed by the astute Senator Xenophon (SA).

In an embarrassing admission the National President, Ken Doolan was forced to reconsider the RSLs position. The Senate Committee comprising Senators Back (Chair), Fawcett, Gallacher, Lambie, McGrath and Xenophon was inquiring into Schedule 2 of the Veterans' Affairs Legislation Amendment (2015 Budget Measures) Bill 2015. The Labor Party sent the Legislation to this Senate Committee and it swung on the proposal to take away the right under certain circumstances to costs for a successful AAT appeal.

The Government sought to deny that avenue of appeal and the RSL meekly supported it.

While being conscious not to “threaten or disadvantage a witness on account of evidence given to a committee, and such an action may be treated by the Senate as a contempt.” it is evident that the National President of the RSL and therefore the RSL was ill prepared to effectively represent its case to the committee. There were 20 written submissions to the inquiry. Some were lengthy and detailed providing background and rationale for the position taken by the particular ESO

or, in several cases, legal firms and individuals. The RSL submission was all of one page and simply acknowledged that the appeal process as outlined on Schedule 2 of the Legislation will best serve the MRCA claimant and therefore simply advised that “The RSL supports this process unconditionally.” No background, no rationale.

Senator Xenophon politely suggested to Ken Doolan that with some “negotiation and some sensible amendments ---- veterans would not be disadvantaged.” Ken Doolan advised that “we (the RSL) will do that and we will do it expeditiously.”

This has since been done but in words indicative of the hesitant approach of our once mighty organisation Ken Doolan advised the Senate Committee that the RSL would “not oppose” the awarding of costs to a claimant. Whatever has happened to emphatic terms such as ‘fully support’ or is there an issue of Government and RSL relations at play here? The question needs to be asked. “Why did it take the prodding of Senator Xenophon to get the RSL, the largest and best resourced ESO in the country, to reconsider its position?”

Sadly the RSL leadership has a track record of failing to work with or acknowledge the expertise of other ESOs’ on the substantive issues confronting the Australian defence community.

It recently stood aside from a joint Media Statement issued by 10 ESO Leaders who are members of the ESO Round Table representing some 150,000 serving and former members of the ADF. The Statement expressed concern at the imbalance in legal resources available to the DVA while such is out of the reach of ordinary veterans. Instead the RSL submitted that it supports the MRCA amendment proposal unconditionally.

The government and DVA are being given a free pass to ignore the aspirations of the Australian defence community because the leadership of the RSL persists in the belief that it and it alone should project the voice of the veteran and ex-service

community. That leadership ignores the reality of the 21st century which says that advocacy and selling the issues of the Australian defence community will be all the more effective by working in concert with all ESOs, utilising their intellectual and personal expertise.

Addressing the issues of the Australian defence community is not a competition!

Kel Ryan  
Life Member RSL

### **AUSTRALIA'S LAVISH SPENDING ON ANZAC MEMORIALS CLOAKS A MORE DISTASTEFUL REALITY**

Paul Daley, The Guardian 11.11.2015

Remembrance Day, commemorated annually on 11 November since 1919 to honour all Commonwealth war dead, has arrived again. But a century after the First World War began, I think it is well and truly time to reflect on how it is, precisely, that we commemorate those killed.

It's certainly time we stopped spending hundreds of millions of dollars on pointless new monuments to the ANZACs and to focus, instead, on the living.

Don't get me wrong. Sixty seconds of solemn reflection on the 11th minute of every 11/11 about the true horror of war and its unquantifiable human cost, is a good thing.

For most of us, given that the dead of the First World War have been so for so very long, "remembering" them has always been an abstract notion. But perhaps that has only served to enhance the potency in Australia (and New Zealand) of the story of ANZAC – the myth and legend of which has gathered like moss during successive decades about the (mostly) men who went and fought and died. It was undoubtedly a momentous event for this new federation, as evidenced by the way Australia has chosen to commemorate parochially, as "ANZAC 100", rather than reflect on what was, after all, a global conflagration that cost many other nations far more dearly.

From Australia's then population of some five million, more than 416,000

Australian men – about half of all those eligible – enlisted. Of the 331,000 deployed, some 60,000 were killed. More than 155,000 were wounded. This excludes the psychologically and emotionally damaged – the tens of thousands who returned with the crippling affliction, unacknowledged for another 60 years and still stigmatised today, of post-traumatic stress disorder.

PTSD remains the scourge of contemporary Australian soldiers, not to mention the millions of civilian victims of conflict that are still being fought today. Just like after the First World War when the legacy of combat (morphine addiction, domestic violence, drunkenness, lingering venereal disease and the shame of disfigurement) festered behind tens of thousands of bolted-shut suburban front doors across the wide brown land, the pain of today's returned servicemen remains hidden from view.

I once sat opposite a retired national RSL president at a private lunch. We talked military history. I told him about my encounters with the plights of modern veterans – about the many suicides and the addictions, of the bureaucratic nightmares many experienced in order to have their war damage acknowledged. He responded that he simply did not "believe" in post-traumatic stress disorder and that in his day the men had just "got on" with it.

PTSD, of course, is not a matter of belief but fact – like climate change or the extinction of the dinosaurs. But then belief – or suspended disbelief – is central to the ANZAC story and Australia's creation myth. This country has been telling itself the story for a long time now, in a quasi-religious language that deifies the "sacrifice" and "spirit" of Australia's white-hatted soldiers, especially the "fallen", never just the "killed".

It cloaks the more distasteful reality of ruined lives, mortal and moral imperfection and evisceration. Which brings us back to the monetary cost of commemoration over the four years of ANZAC 100. A figure calculated by

the organisation Honest History estimates it at approximately \$552m of mostly federal, state and territory money.

In June the Honest History secretary, David Stephens, calculated that the ANZAC 100 spend equated to \$8,800 to commemorate each Australian soldier killed in the First World War compared with \$109 per British fatality and \$2 for each German. The question our politicians need to answer is: why? The spending on ANZAC 100 includes some \$100m on a Sir John Monash "interpretive centre" on the European western front. I recently wrote of the behind the scenes disquiet among military historians, bureaucrats and some politicians over the purpose and cost of the centre.

Last April Tony Abbott, while visiting the Villers-Bretonneux memorial to the 46,000 Australians killed on the western front in the first world war, announced the plan but sources insist this project did not receive federal cabinet approval. Building has not yet commenced.

Malcolm Turnbull, it is said, may have a more iconoclastic view of ANZAC and its place in national creation mythology than Abbott. It would take negligible political cost for Turnbull to ditch Abbott's centre (much as he junked, with cabinet approval, Abbott's ridiculous decision to reinstall knights and dames into the Australian honours system).

In the eternal search for spending cuts, \$100m (\$88.5m in capital cost, \$11.5m in concept design and planning) is no small saving from a decision that would further contrast Turnbull, culturally, ideologically, with Abbott.

As James Brown, the former army officer, Iraq veteran and author of the acclaimed book "ANZAC's Long Shadow" recently pointed out, every dollar spent commemorating a long-dead soldier was not spent on a needier, living veteran. "We're spending millions on monuments which catalogue every death in world war one yet until last year no one was tracking the number of returning modern veterans taking their own

lives," Brown said. "There are direct opportunity costs: \$88m from the defence budget spent on a museum in France is \$88m not going towards weapons training or personnel costs." Let's, by all means, remember the dead – but spend on the living.

**MENTAL INJURIES SUFFERED DURING WAR SERVICE ARE MUCH MORE THAN POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER**

Both the Department of Defence and the Department of Veterans' Affairs have grossly under estimated the number of soldiers returning from international deployments that will suffer from mental illness including PTSD, Anxiety and Depression.

Defence estimates put the figure at less than 2% (1.9%) whereas Ex-Service Organisations estimate the figure to be 20% or more as ADF are recycled through deployment after deployment.

This means that of the 70,000 service men and women that have been deployed to war zones since Vietnam some 14,000 will suffer from some form of mental illness in one form or the other.



Many will be able to manage the disease through family support but others will find it more difficult and unfortunately some will take their own lives rather than fight for assistance from an organisation that sees itself as a gate keeper to Federal Funds rather than a supporter of Veterans Entitlements.

What is not in dispute is that society and the Australian taxpayers who fork out \$166 million a year on veterans mental health programs have little understanding of the issues faced by men and women sent to war in Australia's name who return home

carrying deep mental scars or haunted by the "black dog" of depression.

Many veterans either fear or despise the DVA, as a result of lengthy delays and obstacles facing claimants but what may not be widely known by sailors, soldiers and airmen is that they can be treated under a DVA funded non-liability health care program for mental health issues and alcohol and substance disorders.

This means that treatment for such diseases is not restricted to war caused injuries. A Veteran can seek help whilst his or her claim is being processed and investigated.

If you or a person that you know is suffering from some form of mental illness as a result of their Military Service then please encourage them to seek help from an Advocate who can put them in touch with a medical professional who understands what the Veteran is going through and can provide the help necessary to improve the Veterans quality of life.

**SOME FUN!**



Hmm, not sure about this one, thanks Tex!



Some people ask me the secret of our long marriage. It is simple. We take time to go to a restaurant two times a week. A little candlelight, dinner, soft music and dancing.

She goes Tuesdays, I go Fridays.'

Barry the Aussie builder was going through a house he had just built, with the woman who owned it.

She was telling him what colours to paint each room.

They went into the first room and she said, "This room to be a light blue." The builder went to the front door and yelled out "Green side up" As he went back she said the next room was to be red.

The builder again went to the front door and called out "Green side up". Once back with her, she said "This one to be tan." And again he went to the front door and yelled "Green side up"

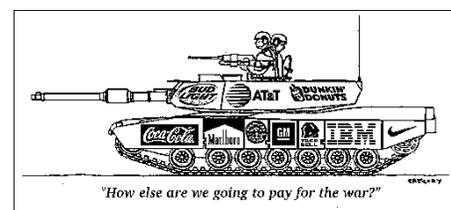
The lady, very curious, said "I keep telling you different colours but you always yell "Green side up". "What do you say that for?"

"Oh, don't you worry about that," said the builder, "I've got a couple of Kiwis laying turf out front."

Two Sailors are in a bar. Every time a buddy comes in they high fives this Sailor and yell, "Two weeks!"

They keep doing this until the bartender asks, "What's all this two weeks stuff?" A Sailor tells him their friend finished a puzzle in two weeks.

The bartender says, "So, what's so great about that?" The Sailor replies, "It said on the side of the box 4 to 6 years."



**WHO WE ARE**

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