

# Veterans Voice

Northern Suburbs Veterans  
Support Centre Inc.

Spring 2015

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## **Transport Allowance Increase**

From 1 July 2015, travel allowances for transport, meals and accommodation under DVA's Repatriation Transport Scheme will increase in line with CPI.

The increases apply to travel by private vehicle as well as accommodation and meal allowances in respect of travel for treatment purposes or disability and income support claims for all eligible veterans, war widows and widowers (entitled persons).

Gold Card holders and White Card holders eligible under the Veterans'

Entitlements Act 1986 (VEA) are entitled to assistance towards travelling expenses when attending approved treatment.

For queries about travel allowances contact Veterans' Transport Services on 1300 550 454 (for metropolitan areas) or 1800 550 454 (for country areas).



An Australian soldier's fatal battle with early onset dementia is hoped to encourage investment into finding the effects of the disease after military service.

Matt Millhouse, 36, was diagnosed with the disease following two trips to Iraq and a battle with PTSD and depression.

On Thursday, his family and friends farewelled him at a funeral in Tasmania, after the dementia caused his brain to die. The illness stemmed from a traumatic incident during one of two tours in Iraq, his wife Terese told the Nine Network.

On October 2004, Trooper Millhouse was inside one of two ASLAVs when their convoy was hit by an explosion from an improvised explosive device.

Although knocked out for a brief period, he managed to protect his wounded commander, Lt Garth Callender, who later survived due to Trooper Millhouse's efforts.

"I believe he was affected by a traumatic brain injury caused by the explosion because I can't see any other reason for it," she told the NineNetwork.

"It's the only one that makes sense."

Sydney University mental health expert- Ian Hickie said the Australian Defence Force was not currently investigating early onset dementia.

He told The Australian that the US had studied links between exposure to blasts and brain injury.

"We've not made the same investment into tracing these difficulties," Professor Hickie said.

The number of Afghanistan veterans who have been diagnosed with PTSD is now more than 1000 and is rising at a rate of 300 cases each year.

*I think all Australians should try to at least acknowledge the Anzac centenary and the sacrifice that over 100,000 Australians have made over the years in different wars.*

*Daniel Keighran VC*

## **Anzac Day 2015: Daniel Keighran VC reflects on his time in the army and on 100 years of Anzac**

*by Daniel Keighran VC*



experiences, losing mates - so to

The ANZAC centenary is very important to me.

Out of those 100 years, I served for 10 of them and I know what it's like to go to war - the

commemorate Anzac Day this year is extremely significant.

Even though there are no World War I veterans left, it is vital that we still recognise the sacrifices those guys made.

The Anzac spirit was forged on the shores of Gallipoli, and to come 100 years on and know that it's still alive and well is quite remarkable.

I can't imagine what it would have been like to row to shore at Gallipoli in timber boats, to step out

of these boats under fire, to look up at the cliffs, and to know that you would soon need to be fighting with such little training as these guys would have had.

You've got your rifle, you've got your bayonet, you've got a few rounds. That's about it - off you go.

I think our diggers were extremely young and extremely ill-prepared for what faced them.

I am quite lucky in that, after I joined the army, I had about four years of training before I first went overseas.

### ***Don't wait 30 years***

Wars and conflicts, peacekeeping and peacemaking operations, hazardous services - none of these discriminate! They will involve anyone! And so in the aftermath we have a burgeoning group of Service people affected by their involvement in many ways.

If the serving person is affected then so are his or her (remember there's no discrimination!) partner/s, children, parents, brothers, sisters and the list goes on like a ripple in a pond - and a deep pond it is.

Are you one of those who have struggled on in bewilderment, coping for years with a partner who "served" in some way and has never been the same since? Then you know what it was like when, finally you found out the reasons why these problems were happening. "If only we'd known! We could have understood. We could have got some help then."

We can help others in this situation NOW! Let's not leave them for 5, 10 or 30 years like many of us. Through our network we can actively seek out and include a wider range of partners (and thus, their families), helping by providing - Support & Information & Education.

Each and every one of us can help. It is as simple as having a cup of coffee or, a chat over the fence to let someone know about the help that is available.

Two World Wars, East Timor, Somalia, Afghanistan, Rwanda, Vietnam, The Gulf, Korea, Iraq, the Deseal-Reseal victims, Bougainville and the list unfortunately, will go on -

Do you know someone who is the partner of a person who was/is involved in these? Remember Bryce Courtney's book which was made into a film - "The Power of One". Each of us is only one but think, if each one of us made contact with just "one" younger partner to let him or her know what support and information is available to them and their families. Multiply that "one" by our membership and see the power of that "one".

Think also, of how much their suffering might be reduced. How many of us have had a veteran parent, maybe even other serving family members? Are you the parent or relative or friend of someone in this situation? Maybe you have met a "partner" in the supermarket or bank queue - that is when you can let them know about NSVA's support.

The NSVSC is seeking to include "current and former wives, partners and widow/ers of veterans with qualifying service who are seeking emotional support and friendship of others in a similar situation".

### **What is - "a similar situation"?**

I suppose we all realise, that if you are living with someone who has PTSD, chemical poisoning and the list goes on, then it makes no difference if you are 29 or 59 years old, whether you go out to paid employment or work at home caring for your family (or both), or whether the problem occurred in Somalia, World War II, East Timor or in the RAAF Deseal Reseal saga because the problems are there - the situation is "a similar situation"!

### **What can I do?**

Remember your power of one. Let's make our own ripples in that pond. If I help one "partner" with support and information, then the ripples that spread out into that partner's family become more positive than negative. If that partner happens to be a younger person then the pond of ignorance and despair becomes much shallower and smaller and the ripples don't turn into tidal waves as the years pass.

### **What is Support?**

Support comes in many guises - listening, understanding (Oh! The joy of not having to explain), having a

good laugh together, bringing someone along to a support group, encouraging them to join and receive our newsletters packed with information, guiding them to services available to help - and the list goes on, from little bits to big.

VVCS for Peacekeepers and Peacemakers and their families do provide some assistance and there are pamphlets available on this aspect of the service but here is a little that You can pass on:

"Counselling services have been developed for Peacekeepers and Peacemakers and their families in recognition of the changing needs of the Australian veteran community"

"Working links have been formed with the Department of Defence, which support the referral of personnel to the counselling service". So currently serving as well as ex personnel are eligible as are their partners and dependant children.

VVCS are approachable so, if in doubt just ring and put your case. There are Outreach Programs for areas with less access to VVCS offices.

### **The future of the NSVSC**

Our organisation is working towards the establishment of a new facility that will provide opportunities for Veterans and Partners of Veterans to get together and discuss issues with others who have or are facing the same types of trauma within relationships.

If you want to become involved or simply would like to know more then contact us at [admin@nsvsc.org.au](mailto:admin@nsvsc.org.au) or ting Jaei-Lea Bedford at [jaei-lea.bedford@nsvsc.org.au](mailto:jaei-lea.bedford@nsvsc.org.au) or ring us on 08 - 9305 9015. If you know a younger person who would like to become involved or just need some assistance talk to them and let them know who we are.

The NSVSC needs and wants to be an association that includes a wide range of partners of all ages, all forces, all wars, conflicts and operations. If our voice is to be heard then we need to be heard with a united and strong voice so we need everyone involved.

**"UNITY IS STRENGTH!"** Don't let them wait for 30 years. Let's act now. Start your own ripple!

### ***NSVSC Appoints its first Patron***

The Northern Suburbs Veterans Support Centre Inc. has at last appointed its first Patron for the forthcoming three years.



As Chairman of the NSVSC I am delighted to announce that Brigadier Phillip White AM RFD has been appointed as Patron of the Association.

Brig White graduated from OCTU in 1977 and was appointed to XLH and his last posting in Western Australia was as Brigade Commander 13 Brigade where he was awarded his AM for outstanding leadership and service.

In civilian life Brig White is the Principal of Melville Senior High School.

### ***Bill strips Veterans of their appeal rights.***

VULNERABLE injured veterans will be stripped of their rights if the Senate rubber-stamps legislation due for consideration on Monday, a leading compensation lawyer says.

BRIAN Briggs, military compensation practice leader with Slater and Gordon, said changes to the appeal process in the Veteran's Affairs Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 will add up to two years to veterans' search for compensation.

"This bill, if passed, will strip vulnerable injured veterans of rights and make it virtually impossible for them to access the support they are entitled to because of the cost and added delays," Mr Briggs said.

The bill contains several other provisions about vocational rehabilitation and repatriation of Vietnam war dead from Malaysia.

Mr Briggs said the second schedule was deeply concerning because it stripped rights from vulnerable veterans.

In introducing the bill to the Senate last month, Assistant Minister for Social Services Mitch Fifield - representing Veterans Affairs Minister Michael Ronaldson - said the changes will simplify appeals.

Injured veterans seeking compensation can now appeal an adverse Department of Veterans Affairs decision through the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission or the Veterans' Review Board.

Under the new legislation, the appeal process will be limited to the review board. A second right of appeal to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal remains.

Mr Briggs said removing the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission option left a single inferior appeal pathway that does not allow for legal representation and will add 18 to 24 months to the process in circumstances where the veteran might have little income.

"These are literally matters of survival versus bankruptcy, life versus death, for the veteran affected," he said.

"We trust that this bill will not be allowed to pass unless the stripping of appeal rights is removed."

### ***Bill Ritchie Donations***

The appeal for donations to assist a Vietnam Veteran and form Royal Australian Artillery Officer Mr Bill Ritchie is well under way.

Mr Ritchie was diagnosed in December 2014 with Motor Neuron Disease and is restricted to an electric wheelchair and requires ongoing medical assistance to maintain a somewhat normal life.

Unfortunately living in Yanchep means that to get to his weekly medical appointments in Joondalup and West Perth he has to rely on DVA transport in the form of a wheelchair taxi. These types of taxis are somewhat restricted and even more so given that Mr Ritchie lives in Yanchep.

Of the five last appointments made Mr Ritchie has missed four because a suitable taxi could not be found

despite DVA offering a cash incentive.

The NSVSC has started a campaign to raise \$21,000.00 to buy a second hand vehicle from Nulsen Haven and at present the appeal stands at \$4058.00.

Donations over \$2.00 are tax deductible so if you would like to donate or know someone that would please pass on our details so that they can contact us.

### ***Staff training***

Two of our Volunteers are heading off to enhance their skills in the area of Veteran Support.

Joanne Beavis is off to Queensland to attend a Forum on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Jaei-Lee Bedford is undergoing SRCA and MRCA Training at DVA.

We wish them both well in their endeavours and know that when they return they will put that new knowledge to good use.

### ***Community Support***

Recently the NSVSC was awarded a cheque for \$300 from Grill'd™ Restaurant Clarkson as a result of its Community Support Program in which the restaurant chain gives back to worthwhile organisations the local community that they call home.

Grill'd™ have developed a program called "Local Matters" in which different groups and organisations within the community can register their details with the local Grill'd™ restaurant and every month each restaurant chooses three worthy organisations to share the love and we were fortunate to be the winners in July 2015.

### ***Who We Are***

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### ***Chairman***

Mr Arthur Ventham RFD MBA CD AFAM