



COMMENTARY NEWSLETTER
ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ARMoured CORPS ASSOCIATION WA Inc
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*Christmas
in July*

Herdsmen

Tavern

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President Robert Gesmundo



I trust you and your families enjoyed the weekend of sunshine and are doing well. For our members that are not well, our thoughts are with you, and I wish you all a speedy recovery.

ANZAC DAY was a great success for another year and was well attended by our members and the general public. I was very proud to be invited to lay a Wreath for RAACAWA at the Dawn Service.

It was also a privilege to be interviewed by Tina Altieri of Ch 7 and shown on Sunrise representing RAACAWA and also a half page photo in the Western Australian on the following morning Tuesday 26 April 2022 confirming that we were "On Parade". The RAACAWA attendance was excellent and the invitation by the Regiment after the march was also well attended.

It was a great "After March" event and the Regiment is to be congratulated.

Well done RAACAWA

Like I always say, the Committee can work hard and make great efforts to arrange social or Ceremonial events, but the success of any event is the support and attendance it receives from you, our members. Our next event is Christmas in July, on 17 July and this has already been promulgated to you all with additional information in this copy of Commentary.

I have been informed that the Old Boys Parade is still a work in progress, and we will keep you updated as we receive additional information.

I would like to point out that I am available at any time should any of you wish to contact me on any matter regarding RAACAWA.

I conclude wishing you all safety and good health and ask for your support of your RAACAWA.

Yours is Armour

Robert Gesmundo



Christmas in July —HERDSMAN TAVERN

Christmas in July function has been organised for this year at the Herdsman Lake Tavern private function room located at 33 Herdsman Parade Wembley for all members, partners and friends. Come along, enjoy the fellowship.

Menu: A La Carte full or seniors menu Prices as indicated

Christmas in July Menu also available

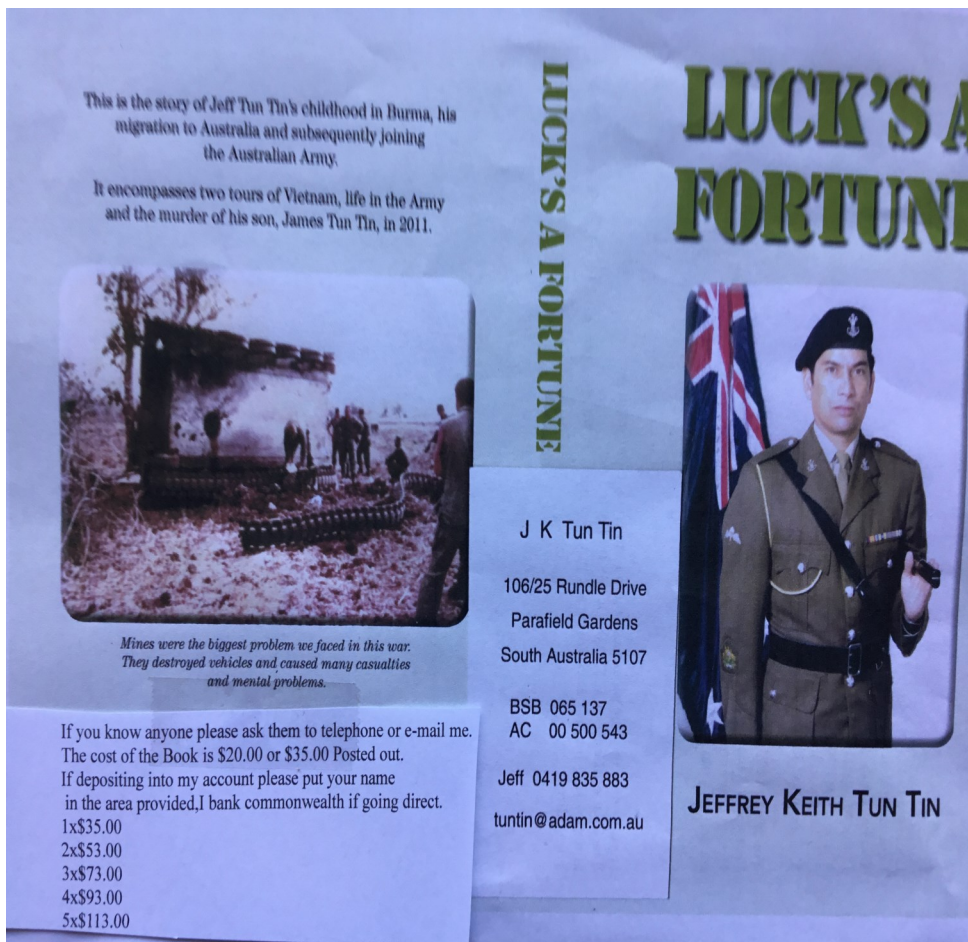
Three course \$34 Two Course \$30

A number of items have been donated for free door and raffle prizes.

Family and friends welcome

SUNDAY 17TH OF JULY 12 NOON START

IT WOULD BE APPRECIATED IF YOU COULD ADVISE THE SECRETARY NOEL MOYES
TELEPHONE 92952281 OR EMAIL secretary.raacawa@gmail.com ASAP confirming your
number attending so that we can ensure we have the enclosed room for our event.



MAKING HISTORY: HALF A MILLION VETERANS IN AUSTRALIA

For the first time ever, it is known that 581,139 Australians have reported they have served or are currently serving in the Australian Defence Force (ADF), as announced in the release of the Census 2021 data today.

Minister for Veterans' Affairs Matt Keogh said that there are 496,276 veterans and 84,865 current serving ADF members, and understanding these figures along with other demographic and lifestyle data is history-making.

"I am proud to announce that for the first time in Australian history, we know that there are more than half a million veterans in Australia, representing 2.8 per cent of the Australian population aged

15 years and over and equating to 1 in 20 households with at least one person who has served,"

"Currently around 247,000 veterans receive support from the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA), about half of the veteran population.

"This is a good sign that not all veterans have needed tailored support services, but I encourage those veterans who do need support and have not yet engaged with DVA or are not sure what help they can access, to reach out."

The Census 2021 data release also outlined key demographic information among the current and former serving ADF population.

"Knowing how many veterans there are and other key factors such as demographics, employment, education and health status is pivotal for ESO's. DVA and other agencies involved with the veteran community can ensure services are provided into the future.

13.4 per cent of our veteran population are female. The largest age group for veterans is 65-74 years of age, and 90 per cent of these veterans are male.

"With the largest Army base in the country, Townsville is home to both the most veterans (8,700) and current serving ADF members (5,500).

Unsurprisingly, the Census 2021 results show that veterans are more likely to participate in volunteer work compared to the general population, attesting to the incredible contributions our veterans make to the community throughout their lives.

Better understanding our veteran population through the Census 2021 will help guide the development and delivery of services and support for Australia's veterans, and will help inform the Government's response to issues veterans are facing, such as health, housing and employment."

To learn more about the results of the Census 2021, including more detail on defence service, visit the ABS website: www.abs.gov.au.

AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE CHAIN OF COMMAND

The chief and vice chief of Australia's defence force will have their terms extended by two years. General Angus Campbell and Vice Admiral David Johnston will stay in their roles until at least 2024. Additionally, the government has requested the term of the chief of joint operations, Lieutenant General Greg Bilton, also be extended for two years. In doing so continuity of Australia's defence capability given recent challenges will be enhanced.

A former army chief, General Campbell was first appointed head of defence in 2018. "We will work together to do our very best to see the defence of this nation and the development of the force and its people," General Campbell said on Tuesday.

A new team of navy, army and air force heads was also announced.

Vice Admiral Mark Hammond has been selected as navy chief, Lieutenant General Simon Stuart will be head of the army and Air Marshal Robert Chipman will lead the air force.



Army farewelled Lieutenant General Rick Burr as Chief of Army and welcomed Lieutenant General Simon Stuart as his successor during a transition of authority ceremony in Canberra on July 1.

CAPTION: *The Army Banner is handed from outgoing Chief of Army Lieutenant General Rick Burr, right, to incoming Chief of Army Lieutenant General Simon Stuart during the Chief of Army handover parade. Photo by Kym Smith.*

Lieutenant General Burr said it was his honour to have served his nation for the past 40 years.

"My lasting memory will be of the incredible soldiers and officers of our Army," Lieutenant General Burr said. "Our people are our strength, delivering incredible outcomes for our nation every day." "I thank them for their service, courage, commitment, and sacrifice.

I want to recognise the people who have enabled and supported the Army during my career, in particular our Navy, Air Force and Public Service colleagues, the Australian public, and our allies and partners. We are stronger together."

Incoming Chief of Army Lieutenant General Stuart said the Army was regenerating its readiness while undergoing a significant program of modernisation. "I am most fortunate to assume command from Lieutenant General Rick Burr, who has led an enormous transformation within our Army," Lieutenant General Stuart said.

"General Burr's commitment to developing our people and our individual and collective cultural and ethical fitness through Good Soldiering is a hallmark of his stewardship of our Army.

"As the 41st officer privileged to lead our Army - a fighting and operational force, a national institution and profession - I am committed to, every day, building on General Burr's rich legacy."

Lieutenant General Burr formally handed over the Australian Army Banner to Lieutenant General Stuart during the parade.

Warrant Officer Grant McFarlane, completing his tenure as Regimental Sergeant Major of the Army, thanked his soldiers for their support and service during his tenure.

"It has been an honour and privilege to serve with you, and I wish you all the best for your future endeavours," Warrant Officer McFarlane said.

He formally passed the pace stick to incoming Regimental Sergeant Major of the Army Warrant Officer Kim Felmingham during the parade.



RAACA ASSOCIATION WA - ANZAC MARCH PERTH



Brett Sutton, Warren Robson, Tony Beekwilder, Ian Goodall, Robert Gesmundo,



BRIG SIR MURRAY BOURCHIER MEMORIAL SHEPPARTON VIC DEDICATED ANZAC DAY



DAWN SERVICE CHAMPION LAKES WA



6 Don Burgess with members of



RAAC Contingent 3 CAV (Vietnam) 1 ARMD

RAACA CORP mid year SITREP– Noel McLoughlin Chairman

The pre-ESORT meeting on 14/6 was the first one conducted in three years and it was a pleasure to actually sit down and converse with colleagues other than via Zoom.

The Corporation continues to advocate for the harmonising of all three Acts and will continue to do so. This was also discussed at the RC hearings in Canberra recently but with an emphasis by witnesses on only harmonising DRCA and MRCA. My view is we need all three Acts harmonised as there are beneficial provisions that need to be cross-vested from all three Acts into one and not just from two Acts. By excluding the VEA 1986 the beneficial provisions in that Act would be excluded.

The contention was advanced that possibly repeal of the VEA given the smaller demographic (due to age etc) that now receive VEA coverage and benefits should be considered. A contrary argument to have that Act remain until the last VEA veteran has marched off the parade ground now appears to be what will occur. I strongly agree with that occurring as there are still veterans who require VEA advocacy.

The Corporation's stated position at ADSO/pre-ESORT remains unchanged.

Namely that, no detriment is to be suffered by the veteran community in respect of changes to veterans' policy by Government or DVA. It is very pleasing to note ADSO respects that stand and agrees with it.

At the June pre-ESORT there was discussion in relation to statistics provided by Peacekeeper & Peacemaker Veterans Assn who contended that, *"it is hard to quantify the increase in incomplete or inadequately supported claims however some place it in the 80% area."* of claims lodged online via My Service which failed for reasons such as the SOP connection to their service not being successfully established. That figure of 80% is a worry. The SOP regime is complex.

The added complication of self-representing is a major concern and the old adage of lawyer who represents themselves is directly relevant. The risk of claim failure through self-representing are greater than using the services of a veterans' practitioner. There needs in my view, to be a more concerted campaign to urge veterans who are lodging a claim to seek the services of an ESO representative. It is something the Corporation has advocated for some time now at ADSO and will continue to do so.

While it is a veteran's right to run their own case, to self-represent it is a fraught process to go as a stand-alone claimant. It remains the Corporation's contention that the larger ESOs such as the RSL have the facilities and horsepower to provide this level of support for first-instance claims.

To that end, the link below to the ATDP Advocate register will enable veterans and veterans' practitioners to access by postcode or actual location an ESO with the total complement of Advocates per entity and the level they practice at. Go to <https://www.advocateregister.org.au/>

As can be seen from the Australian Veterans Health Services (AVHS) website, the complexity of the process is not for the faint-hearted.

In looking the My Service component of the claims process it beggars belief that the following supporting documents are considered **optional**:

What we need

Providing supporting documents is optional but may help us assess your claim.

Supporting documents may include

Incident Report (Sentinel report)

Authority to Participate in Civilian Sport

Hazardous Material Exposure Report

Training Programmes/Itineraries

As Mike VonBerg opined at the meeting he has never seen a claim refused where too much evidence has been presented. Speaking with the benefit of 36 years qualified privilege I agreed with him 100% and made it quite clear that even though no onus lies with either party a failure to provide further facts and better evidence to advance one's case would result in the claim being determined on the papers as they stand and the claim get refused.

Why this field is considered optional defies belief. Suffice to say ESORT will continue to have that field amended.

ESORT MATTERS 4/6:

As the Corporation is not a member of ESORT the following info was provided.

Liz Cosson informed at present that the new Minister has removed the cap on staff levels to help with processing claims and removing that current claims log jam. Excellent news..

The use of contractors will continue only to the extent they will be in place until the new Delegates are deployed. This is necessary to ensure no blockages or gaps in the claims investigation, assessment and determination process occur.

The infusion of new Departmental officers to replace contractors must in my view be seamless and not cause unnecessary detriment through delays to claimants. In my view this is critical as delays in processing are - based on my experience as an Advocate in representing MRCA claimants are now blown out in excess of three years

The backlog in claims that currently exists is a source of great anguish for veterans and families.

It is also a source of great concern for the Corporation and its kindred ESOs as well.

Conversations with Case Managers, PI Delegates, Determining Officers, VRB Registrars and VRB Client Services Officers show they are just as frustrated with the backlogs as are the veterans themselves. The on-again, off-again situation resulting from Covid forcing staff to work from home and sometimes with problematic communications has also been in my experience a significant factor in inhibiting timely determination of claims.

The comments in evidence by former VRB Principal Member LTCOL Doug Humphries to the RC in Canberra to the effect that if one took away the section 31 and section 347 internal review processes, the VRB would do the job better and faster with better outcomes for veterans, is very telling. The range of redress options open to veterans and widows through the expanded VRB appeals system, including a Vulnerable Veterans Protocol give his comments greater weight.

Ms Cosson also reported there had been a 68% increase in Household Services.

In my experience with MRCA clients over the past 16 months, DVA's Household Services have performed brilliantly -very responsive and always available to provide advice to both Advocates and veterans.

THE Mc KINSEY REPORT

The relevant document is attached for your info. The Vice Chair of the Peacekeepers/Peacemakers Assn was critical of its content stating *inter alia*:

I obtained a copy today after hunting for a while for something called the McKinsey Report.

This document I have renamed the McKinsey Report for clarity and I do really hope there is more to it because this seems to have been drawn from an original document.

I see some very high level issues with it and the first is that perhaps accountability lies within DVA. The program director needs to be independent and external to DVA IAW best practice be it PRINCE2, PMBOK, PMM or other program/project management metholo-

There is a focus on the importance on process and not outcomes for veterans. I see nothing in there that suggests working in ways that focus in case management whereby a claim is submitted, a case manager appointed who then proactively coordinates the rapid and accurate completion. Instead all I see terms like "wait for emails to be returned and then x,y and z"; eg Assumes DRCA PI claims over 500 days are eligible for refuse to deal, while delegates waits for client to respond to offer and "Assumes delegate can automatically populate Determination letter, reducing Determination stage touch time to 10 mins across claims". This is why people take their lives, an automatically populated letter that de-personalises the whole process and further traumatises veterans and their families.

COMMENTARY

Overview: Slide 2/4 proposes five initiatives within DVA's current budgeting and resourcing including at point 5 ***Minimising submission of conditions with low acceptance rates***

This begs the question, what low acceptance conditions have been identified?

Why did they not form part of this overview?

What detriment will claimants suffer if they come within the ambit of point 5?

Similarly, Slide 3/4 deserves comment. The proposal to increase NLHC conditions is welcomed and supported. The Corporation has since joining ADSO advocated for the extension of NLHC treatment for injuries to weight-bearing joints and spine (e.g. lumbar spondylosis). We will continue to advocate for this. The extension of NLHC from mental health and associated conditions <https://defencehealth.com.au/media/2794/transitioning-from-the-adf-september-2019.pdf> to include some physical conditions is definitely one requiring serious consideration for NLHC inclusion. According to Lindgren (2022):

DVA's advice is that in summary, the report identifies 11 priority initiatives for implementation to address the claims process and the claims backlog. These initiatives were selected based on the modelled impact by December 2023. A further 26 ideas were considered and not prioritised due to the need for significant legislative change, significant and/or costly information system changes, or a limited impact on the backlog within the required timeframe.

The main areas of focus for the initiatives are in:

- *supporting veterans to submit complete claims, particularly for conditions that are likely to be approved;*
- *helping medical providers to supply accurate, timely and complete information to support claim decision-making;*
- *establishing dedicated tiger teams to complete claims;*
- *rebalancing the workforce to address movements in claims from initial liability to permanent impairment as required; and improving claims processing once complete information is received. Some initiatives have interdependencies with actions DVA has in train, and actions relating to the Commonwealth Ombudsman's report of January 2022, on DVA communication with veterans. Recommended actions from the McKinsey findings that do not require Government approval and are within DVA's current resources have been progressed, aligned to transformation and other initiatives DVA has in train.*

Given the Royal Commission currently under way it remains to be seen if this 2021 report will be either accepted and folded into the RC's findings or recommendations or not.

Noel Mc Laughlin
Chairman
RAAC Corporation
25/6/22

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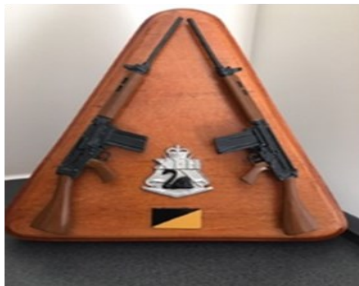


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PROUDLY VETERAN OWNED

375mL 2.95% Alc/Vol

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