



Vietnam Veterans Association

National Executive

National Secretary, RMB 5040 Via Heyfield 3858

10th NATIONAL CONGRESS

NOALIMBA CONFERENCE CENTRE
VENUS ST, BATEMAN. WA.

SATURDAY 6th May 1989

9.30am

OPEN CONGRESS

National President Mr Tim McCombe opened the meeting and welcomed Guests, State Delegates and Members to the 10th National congress.

ADDRESS TO CONGRESS

Mr George Gear MHR.

Representing the Minister for Veterans Affairs addressed the National congress
(As attached....ANNEX A)

Mr Alan Rocher MHR.

Representing the Opposition spokesman for Veterans Affairs addressed the national congress
(As attached....ANNEX B)

Mr Lionel Woodward.

Secretary, Dept of Veterans Affairs, assisted by Mr Garry Collins, Deputy Commissioner (WA) from DVA addressed the National congress

Mr Ric Marshall

National Director of the Vietnam Veterans Councillng service addressed the National congress
(As attached....ANNEX C)

Mr Tony Weaire.

President, Vietnam Veterans Joblink program Inc, assisted by Mr Phil Stanwell (Co ordinator Joblink) addressed the National congress

Mr Robin Harris.

President, ACT Branch VVAA reported to National congress viewpoints on the VEA Monitoring committees report.

Mr Jerry Poulson

Delegate (TAS) gave a report on the Tasmania VVAA "BUSH RETREAT".

Mr Tim McCombe.

National President, VVAA gave a report on the "EVATT RE-VISITED" seminar at ANU and a report on the Austasian children situation.

The congress was recessed until 9am sunday 7th May 1989.

The WA State branch entertained delegates and members at a "Sixties Night" at a Perth hotel. Great night.

SUNDAY 7th May 1989

9am

President Tim re-convened the 10th National congress

1. MINUTES OF THE 9TH NATIONAL CONGRESS

Moved; QLD

Seconded; TAS

That the minutes as circulated are a true and correct record of the 9th National congress and that they be received

CARRIED

2. BUSINESS ARISING

- 2.1 QLD queried the date of submission, to the Minister of Veterans affairs of the items pertaining to veteran welfare. President Tim accepted that he was at fault in the late submission and apologised for the oversight.
- 2.2 QLD noted that the item from the previous minutes tended by the QLD state branch (Motion no 2, 9th Nat Congress) was also tended to the Minister and that a "Less than acceptable" reply was returned.
- 2.3 QLD stated its disappointment in the other states that they had not promoted the sale of VVAA Plaques (Motion QLD no 9th National congress) and that it was a worthwhile exercise and announced the amount of \$143 presentation to National office.
QLD expressed the view that all states should promote the sale of the Plaques and the suggestion that an advertisement should be placed in 'DEBRIEF'
- 2.4 The following items were deferred to general business
- (a) Medals, HMAS SYDNEY and logistical support forces
 - (b) Citations, Members served 173rd Airborne Bde

3. TREASURERS REPORT

- 3.1 National Treasurer Mr Grant Collins tabled his report that had been circulated which included
- (a) Treasurers written report
 - (b) Auditors report
 - (c) Computer analysis of costs
- 3.2 The Treasurer commented on the following items
- (a) That payments to the total of \$2400 in cheque form from the publishers of "DEBRIEF" had NOT been honored on two occasions, this in default of contract. Having left it to National President Tim to contact the publishers, and not being satisfied with the results he contacted the publishers and became aware of problems re the National mailing list.

The Treasurers stated it was very important that congress discussed the problem and gave some direction to the National executive on this matter

- (b) The Treasurer outlined his misgivings on the travel costs of VVAA advocates and asked that congress give direction on this problem

- 3.3 The National treasurer gave a report on the current financial situation since the end of the last audit period (31 Dec 88)

INCOME	(from 1st Jan 89)	\$ 13,770.57
EXPENDITURE	(from 1st Jan 89)	9,274.01
SURPLUS		4,196.56
+ BALANCE 1988		5,640.45
CREDIT BALANCE		\$ 9,837.01

Moved : WA

Seconded : SA

That the Treasurers report as tabled be received
CARRIED

Moved : NSW

Seconded : QLD

That the Treasurers report was of such a high standard and that his reports are so much more professional than past reports that this motion of gratitude and appreciation be recorded.
CARRIED

4. SECRETARY'S REPORT

- 4.1 National Secretary John Printz tabled his report which commented on the following items of administration

(a) The continued adoption of the system of spreading the National Executive members in as many states as possible and practicable was successful in that it allowed

- (1) A National presence over a larger area at Government and DVA offices for better representations
- (2) Stops Stateism
- (3) Helps communication

(b) That the National Executive meeting held during the year was not a significant success due to the interpretation from the National constitution and the lack of identification of the roles and responsibilities of the executive members

(c) That after 10 years the VVAA is recognised by Governments, departments and other Ex-Services organisations and that the VVAAS views are listened to.

- (d) That the VVAA has to develop a professional approach, remove the Hap-Hazard aspects and improve communication and Advocate services for veterans

Moved : SA

Seconded: NT

That the National Secretary's report as tabled, be received
CARRIED

5. PRESIDENTS REPORT

- 5.1 National President Mr Tim McCombe tabled his report
(As Attached....ANNEX D)

Questions arising....

- A. NSW raised the question that as the National Memorial committee was in receipt of a very generous grant for administrative purposes has the National President asked similar funding

President Tim replied that the grant application is for \$15,000 and that the \$5,000 received is all that funds allow

- B. NSW raised the question on the unwieldiness of the title, VIETNAM VETERANS REMEMBRANCE DAY, Battle of Long Tan, 18th August.

It was resolved to discuss the matter in general business

Moved : QLD

Seconded : WA

That the Presidents report as Tabled, be received
CARRIED

6. ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS

- 6.1 President Tim declared all positions vacant and invited Mr Lachlan Irvine to chair the elections, with the power of a casting vote
- 6.2 A discussion on the position of a Returning officer took place and it was resolved that if a non member was available he be invited to act as returning officer
- 6.3 As there was no non member available it was resolved that Lachlan Irvine be the returning officer, without a casting vote and that all candidates be allowed 3 mins to address delegates

Moved : QLD

Seconded : VIC

That the election proceed and that in the event of a tied vote that problem be dealt with if and when it arises
CARRIED

PRESIDENT

- 6.4 WA (R Cox) nominated **Tim McCombe** Seconded NT (R Roberts)
NSW (N Robertson) Nominated **John Haines** Seconded QLD (J
Thompson)

After each candidate addressed the delegates the vote was taken

RESULT....	Tim McCombe	9
	John Haines	7

Tim McCombe was duly elected

VICE PRESIDENT

- 6.5 WA (R Cox) nominated **Robin Harris** Seconded NT (R Roberts)
QLD (J Thompson) nominated **John Haines** Seconded VIC (J
Printz)

After each candidate addressed the delegates the vote was taken

RESULT....	John Haines	12
	Robin Harris	2

John Haines was duly elected

SECRETARY

- 6.6 NSW (N Robertson) nominated **John Printz** seconded SA (
T JOHNSON)

There being no further nominations **John Printz** was elected unopposed

TREASURER

- 6.7 QLD (J Thompson) nominated **Grant Collins** seconded VIC
(J Printz)

There being no further nominations **Grant Collins** was elected unopposed

7. MOTIONS FROM STATES

8. QUEENSLAND

8.1 RSL LOG OF CLAIMS

Moved : QLD

Seconded : SA

That National congress, in the interest of all veterans and their dependents, sanction the RSL Log of Claims and communicate this to the RSL National executive

Moved : WA

Seconded : SA

That this motion be deferred until the PM to allow delegates time to study the log of claims

CARRIED

8.2 APPRAISAL OF NATIONAL CONSTITUTION OBJECTIVES

Moved : QLD

Seconded : VIC

That the National executive conduct a national membership appraisal of the stated objectives of the VVAA in the constitution to ascertain the appropriateness of those objectives

Moved : NT

seconded : SA

That this motion be deferred until the PM to allow delegates time to discuss the motion

CARRIED

8.3 APPOINTMENT OF A VIETNAM VETERAN TO VVCS

Moved : QLD

seconded : WA

That the VVAA request the Minister to appoint to the staff of each VVCS office, A Vietnam Veteran, suitably qualified who may perform a liaison function. To specifically accompany and be physically present during initial contact with veteran in crisis

CARRIED

Items discussed

Letter to Minister, copy Ric Marshall
Possible to fill project officers position as mentioned in "After the march"
Vet to Vet at first contact VVCS office
Be experienced in claims etc
Co-ord with veteran groups
operate ancillary services
Attendance must be desire of client
Must be put to minister as financially sound
must be qualified for position
Must be suitable for position

8.4 INCREASE DEFENCE SERVICE HOME LOAN

Moved : QLD

seconded : SA

That the VVAA call on the Federal Government to increase the existing level of home loans under the Defence Services Home loans scheme from \$25,000 to \$70,000, indexed yearly

Amendment : ACT

seconded : WA

(Add) or a cash grant of equivalent value
DEFEATED.....10 against 6 for

The motion was put
CARRIED

8.5 INTEGRATION OF RGHS in STATE SYSTEM

Moved : QLD

Seconded : SA

Letter to Pm.

That the VVAA whilst noting the Prime minister's assurances that following the integration of RGHS into state hospital systems, veterans will retain priority access to treatment, the VVAA wishes to register the concern of it's members that such assurance can not be fulfilled as individual state governments have publicly committed themselves to equal access to hospitalisation for their constituents
CARRIED

8.6 RPBS.....RESTORE PARITY

That the VVAA request the government to restore parity to the Repatriation Pharmaceutical benefits Scheme (RPBS) to the widows of veterans and recipients of DVA service pensions. The VVAA also would consider any attempt to reduce Disabled veterans access from RPBS to NHS pharmaceutical benefits as a serious attack on veterans' entitlements as it would immediately prevent the existing departmental authority to authorise medications and dressings outside of the existing lists but which are deemed to be medically appropriate to the veterans disability
CARRIED

8.7 LIBERALISE LIFESTYLE RATING

Moved : QLD

Seconded : NSW

That the VVAA request the Dept of Veterans Affairs through the Minister to liberalise the lifestyle rating in the assessment of the Extreme Disablement Allowance (EDA) by reducing the rate to 5, thereby allowing the EDA to operate as it was intended, to assist those who but for the fact they are over 65 years of age would qualify for a pension higher than 100%. At the present the requirement of a rating of 7 means the applicant must virtually be....

- a. Housebound
 - b. unable to maintain a reasonable relationship with their family, and
 - c. Have the quality of life of a vegetable
- investigation of applications will show that only a handful of veterans through out Australia have been successful
CARRIED

After a wide discussion where the issues re ; boundary problems on the Queensland, Victorian, ACT borders and the Broken hill group the following motion was moved

Moved : QLD

seconded : VIC

That this problem be passed to the National Executive for research and recommendation at the National council meeting to be held in Alice springs

CARRIED

9.4 LETTER..NATIONAL PRESIDENT/NATIONAL MEMORIAL

*Completed
16/7*
This motion arose from a letter from the Central coast and Hunter Valley sub branch addressed to Tim McCombe with a copy to the NSW State president censuring the President for submitting his ideas for the National Memorial and passing them off as VVAA members wishes

Moved : NSW

seconded : VIC

That the National secretary write to the Central Coast and Hunter Valley sub-branch requesting further details on this matter so as to place the full details before the National council at the Alice Springs meeting. The reply to be forwarded through the NSW state branch

CARRIED

9.5 LIFE MEMBERSHIP.....FRANK HUNT OAM

Moved : NSW

seconded : QLD

That Mr Frank Hunt be awarded Lifemembership of the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia

CARRIED

It was resolved that the National secretary would provide the certificate, signed by the National President and delivered to the NSW State President for framing and presentation at a suitable function arranged by the NSW State branch

It was decided to deal with all lifemembership business at this time

9.6 LIFE MEMBERSHIP.....TED WARNER
.....PAULA VOLTZ OAM

Moved : VIC

Seconded : NSW

That Mr Ted Warner be awarded Lifemembership of the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia

CARRIED

Moved : VIC

Seconded : WA

That Mrs Paula Voltz OAM be awarded Lifemembership of the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia

CARRIED

9.7 LIFE MEMBERSHIP.....JIM MUIR

Moved : QLD

Seconded : WA

That Mr Jim Muirs previous nomination be ratified by the presentation of a Life Membership certificate as a Lifemember of the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia

CARRIED

9.8 LIFE MEMBERSHIP BADGES

Moved : WA

Seconded : VIC

That the Lifemembership badge already produced by the WA State branch be adopted as the National Lifemembers badge and that it be the responsibility of the nominating state to purchase the badge currently at a price of \$25

CARRIED

It was resolved that the National executive write up a set of rules and criteria for the award of Association life membership to be ratified at National council.

Secretary's note

Discussion on lifemembership ratification was held with no motion forth coming for Terry Murtaugh (TAS) according to the tapes it appears that he fell in the criteria. I Suggest that TAS move the motion at National council if that is the wish

Attached as ANNEX E is the state nominations and criteria for the above Lifemembership awardees

10 WESTERN AUSTRALIA

10.1 AUSTRALIAN VIETNAM WAR VETERANS TRUST FUND

Moved : WA

Seconded :

That the National executive submit a test application to apply for funds to give veterans access to transit (Halfway) houses

After a short address from the VVAA member of the trust committee this motion was withdrawn and guideline were given to the National executive for action at their disgression.

10.2 **ADVOCACY..... COSTS/OPERATION**

Moved : WA

Seconded : VIC

That some form of system be put in place to cover the costs of the day to day running of advocates duties by put in place

After some discussion it was resolved to defer this motion to general business

10.3 **RSL...VVAA EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIP**

Moved : WA

Seconded : ACT

That the WA branch of the VVAA moves that this congress determine that no officer of the VVAA at branch and National level may simultaneously hold office in the RSL at State and National level
DEFEATED

10.4 **ANNUAL REPORTS AND STATE ACTIVITIES**

Moved : WA

Seconded : SA

That each state branch interchange copies of each others minutes of general meetings and that use of modern methods of communication such as computer with modem or Fax facilities be used

It was resolved that National executive prepare a proposition for decision at National council in Alice Springs

10.5 **COMPILE LIST OF VIETNAM VETERAN DEATHS**

Moved : WA

Seconded :

That the VVAA compile a List of Vietnam veterans who had died since the Vietnam war

It was resolved that from previous experience this was not an exercise that would be successful, as was shown during the Royal commission and since.

10.6 **REPATRIATION GENERAL HOSPITALS**

Moved : WA

Seconded : NT

That the WA branch of the VVAA agrees in principal with the handing over of RGHS to the state hospital system, that this process could be stopped for the present, But points out the dangers of not reaching a negotiated settlement within the near future.

Within a period of 10 years the returned service community will be reduced from an estimated 680,000 to 360,000. It would be apparent what this will do with our lobbying power and thus our negotiating strength.

Governments of any complexion will dictate rather than negotiate with the ex-service community. We therefore recommend to the

congress that the VVAA agrees to transfer of RGHS on the following conditions

- a. That no person eligible for treatment will be disadvantaged with regard to access for quality of treatment
- b. That the staff of RGHS not be disadvantaged with regard to pay and benefits
- c. That the transfer shall not take place until such time as suitably enforceable contracts have been signed between the commonwealth and the states
- d. To assist in the oversight of the operation of these contracts and the welfare of beneficiaries, this branch of the VVAA recommends an addition to the conditions, Presently under consideration, this being the appointment of two (2) Ex-service representatives to the health commission of each state and two (2) Ex-service representatives to the board of each hospital

After wide discussion it was resolved with the following motion

Moved : QLD

Seconded : SA

That due to lack of direction to Delegates from their membership it was moved that the above motion be dealt with at National council in Alice Springs, after direction from membership
CARRIED

11 VICTORIA

11.1 ADMIN AND FINANCIAL COMMITMENT..AUSTASIAN CHILDREN

Moved : VIC

Seconded : WA

That the National executive, or any individual member of the National executive shall not commit the association, the state branches or individual members to any policy, submission or proposition concerning administrative or Financial commitments without a 2/3rds approval of State Branches

After wide discussion the following motions arose and Victoria withdrew its original motion

Moved : QLD

Seconded : WA

That there shall be no departure by any individual of the National executive from established VVAA policy without prior approval of the National executive *congress*
CARRIED

Moved : WA

Seconded : SA

That on the subject of Austasian children, this association whilst we recommend to individual members of the association, Generosity. We are firmly against committing association funds in any way or form.
We are happy that other support groups and the South Vietnamese

population in Australia have indicated they may do so.
CARRIED

It was resolved that the National secretary point out to Senator Ray (Minister for Immigration) that as per the Presidents statement that the submission re Austasian children has not been ratified by National congress and that it is revoked.

11.2 DEBRIEF... RSL BASHING

Moved : VIC

Seconded : SA

That the National congress discuss and make a binding resolution on the level of criticism that can be directed at any Ex service organisation

The following points of discussion were put forward from all quarters of the meeting and are listed with repetitions taken out

- a. Use all DEBRIEF space for welfare and sub-branch information
- b. Letters to Editor be retained
- c. Criticism of RSL is not deserving in all states
- d. That change in the RSL can only come from within
- e. Public perception is that.. RSL and VVAA is in conflict
 - .. Lack of unity
 - .. Bigots and racists not veterans
- f. Any disagreement between RSL and VVA should be direct not thru media or DEBRIEF
- g. That care taken to ensure that letters to the editor in DEBRIEF is not stirred up.
- h. That there is both non support and support amongst Vietnam veterans for the RSL
- i. That although the RSL is permitted its views the VVAA should assert its views without confrontation and the VVAA will be seen in a more professional view
- k. Lack of unity should not be supplied as a weapon to governments
- l. Better communication should be developed

Moved : QLD

Seconded : VIC

That the editorials previously based on the policy speech by Phil Thompson in 1985 are no longer fully agreeable at this time. Those items where criticism of other Ex-service organisations is still valid are to be transmitted by letter direct to that organisation ~~direct~~ and in a non confrontation way. Also that the 1985 policy items are to be refreshed by the National executive and tabled at National council for decision
CARRIED

11.3 **CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION/WELCOME HOME**

Moved : Vic

Seconded : QLD

That a Certificate of appreciation be awarded to the Welcome home Parade committee for their efforts in conducting the occasion

CARRIED

11.4 **PUBLICATION OF SUB-BRANCH ADDRESSES..DEBRIEF**

Moved : VIC

Seconded : QLD

That the complete list of State and Sub-branches be printed in DEBRIEF, Space permitting. Ensuring that State Branch Addresses are a permanent fixture.

CARRIED

12 **TASMANIA**

12.1 **ISSUE OF ICB**

Moved : TAS

Seconded : SA

That the VVAA secure issue of the Infantry Combat Badge to ALL members of the Infantry corp who served in Vietnam

After some discussion the following motion was put

Moved : NSW

Seconded : WA

That on the information that CARO has changed its policy on this matter the National executive was to investigate and send out results to all branches

CARRIED

Tasmania withdrew its motion

13 **SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

13.1 **NATIONAL WAR MEMORIAL**

Moved : SA

seconded : NSW

That the memorial has the names of ALL 50,000 Australian Service Men and women who served in the Army, Navy and Air Force in and around Vietnam between 1962 to 1973 prominently displayed in alphabetical order, The names of those killed in action to be marked with a cross

CARRIED



National Patron:
Mr J.H. Greenwood OBE

VIETNAM VETERANS ASSOC. OF AUSTRALIA WESTERN AUSTRALIA BRANCH (INC.)

P.O. Box 21, Maylands, W.A. 6051 Telephone: (09) 370 3011

Reg. Charity No. 454

MOTION 1 LOSS OF WAR WIDOWS RIGHTS

The VVAA look into the loss of War Widow's rights under new DSH Loans Scheme since the hand over to Westpac ✓

MOTION 2 PORTABILITY OF DSH LOANS

The VVAA lobby the Federal Government to keep election promises made before the last election in making ALL DSH loans portable including pre-Dec 1987. ✓

MOTION 3 VIETNAM VETERANS JOBLINK SCHEME

That the VVAA lobby the Federal Government to adopt the Vietnam Veterans Joblink Scheme in other states as has been so successfully established in W.A. and to be Federally Funded. ✓

MOTION 4 EMPLOYMENT OF DOCTORS AT DVA HOSPITAL

The VVAA lobby the Federal Government that doctors employed throughout the DVA system, should be of Australian background and not of Asian origin, as we feel this is an insult to our WW2 vets as well as to Vietnam Veterans. ✗

MOTION 5 INTERGRATION OF RGH TO STATE GOVERNMENT

Until such time that veterans are given priority of access to RGH, the VVAA does not even consider the hand over of RGH to State Government. ✗

MOTION 6 NATIONAL LIFE MEMBERSHIP

*Seen to take
steps to the
benefit of
members*
If a National Life Member of the VVAA is seen to be a ~~disruptive~~ *CONGRESS* influence to any State that the National Council has the right to revoke such a Membership if they see fit. ✓

13.2 DESIGN OF MEMORIAL

Moved : SA

seconded : QLD

That the memorial be appropriately designed to depict the vietnam war and that the VVAA be referred to with the designs for approval.
CARRIED

13.3 DISADVANTAGE TO PUBLIC SERVANTS

Moved : SA

seconded : WA

That the DVA investigate the claims of SA veterans in the SA Public service that their career paths could be disadvantaged as the Public Service act (s49a) does not recognise as "War Service" any war related service after 1945

It was resolved that the National executive was to investigate and resolve

13.4 VIETNAM MEDAL

Moved : SA

seconded : QLD

That the VVAA supports the claim by the RAN, Australian Embassy Military Staff personnel, and CMF officers who spent more than 1 day in Vietnam during the war to be eligible for the Vietnam medal
CARRIED

14 NORTHERN TERRITORY

14.1 AVWTF APPLICATION FORM

Moved : NT

Seconded : WA

That the VVAA express its disappointment in the Application form style and the small print on the leaflet.
CARRIED

15 AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

15.1 MONITORING COMMITTEE REPORT

Moved : ACT

seconded : SA

That the VVAA request the Government to reconsider its response to recommendation 2.1 and repeal sections 23 (1.a) and 24 (1.a) as altogether un necessary and unduly harsh upon veterans
CARRIED

15.2 **MONITERING COMMITTEE REPORT**

Moved : ACT

seconded : WA

That the VVAA urge the Government to reconsider its response to recommendation 2.3 and urges that an applicant should satisfy the requirements of Sections 23 (1.c) and 24 (1.c) where free of incapacitation from war caused disabilities the applicant

- a. would have continued to engage in remunerative work or would have continued on a intermittent or part time basis as the case may be, and
- b. would not have sustained the loss of salary, wages or earnings on his or her own account

^{thus} amounts to a substantial departure from previous policy but emphasis that the VEA monitoring committee considered that such departure was justified

CARRIED

15.3 **SERVICE PENSIONS/VRB**

Moved :ACT

seconded : QLD

That the VVAA petition the Government to give approval to the undertaking given by Senator Gietzelt to include Service pension reviews within the jurisdiction of the VRB

CARRIED

16 **MOTIONS DEFERRED TILL PM**

16.1 **RSL LOG OF CLAIMS**

After discussion Queensland motion 8.1 was CARRIED

(It was resolved that the log of claims would be looked at by Robin Harris (ACT) and his written report be circulated for confirmation)

16.2 **APPRAISAL OF VVAA OBJECTIVES**

After discussion Queensland motion 8.2 was CARRIED

16.3 **ADVOCACY COSTS**

After discussion WA motion 10.2 was withdrawn with the resolution that the National executive was to produce a recommendation to be dealt with at National council.

17 **GENERAL BUSINESS**

17.1 **BOOK OF POETRY.....MRS WILLIAMS**

Moved : QLD

Seconded : SA

That the VVAA endorses the concept of Mrs Williams's project in principle and receive the final draft for approval
CARRIED

17.2 **LEGAL AID**

President Tim congratulated NSW for is work in determining the means testing on pensions appellants was negative as tabled

17.3 (A) **DATE MOVE FOR 90 CONGRESS**

Moved : SA

seconded : WA

That the National congress be held in the last weekend of may each year
CARRIED

17.3 (B) **MOTIONS FOR CONGRESS....IN BY**

Moved : VIC

seconded : WA

That motion and notice of motion be submitted to the National secretary 1 month prior to the congress
CARRIED

17.4 **DEBRIEF MAILING LIST.. LEGAL GRIEVANCE**

Moved : VIC

Seconded : NSW

That the National Treasurer contact the VVAA solicitor Mr Bob Wyburn to ascertain and retrieve the DEBRIEF mailing list
CARRIED

17.5 **WAR CEMERTRY.....MALAYA**

A report was given on the standard of the War cemertry in Malaya and the recommendation that any veteran travelling in Malaya be advised through DEBRIEF its location.

17.6 **NEXT CONGRESS VENUE**

Moved : TAS

Seconded : WA

That the next congress be held in Tasmania

SA offered Adelaide as an alternative
NT offered Darwin as an alternative

It was resolved that a draw from the hat decide the next three venues for National Congress

Speech for George Gear, MHR.

Tenth Annual VVAA National Congress, WA.

May 6, 1989.

(Introduction as required)

Thank you for allowing me to represent my colleague, the Minister for Veterans', Ben Humphreys, at your national congress.

He made a point of asking me to give you his apologies at not being here, and also that I pass on his best wishes for a successful function.

It is something of an honour to address this tenth national congress: a decade of well-attended function is always a satisfying achievement, and it shows just how far the VVAA has come since it was formed.

Although the Association was born basically out of frustration and concern over some narrow issues, it has grown and matured into an organisation to be respected.

The Federal Government regularly seeks the VVAA's advice - if the association hasn't already lobbied the Government first - and values the time and effort the Association puts into its various representations.

I welcome the chance to see the Association in action today. I'll listen very closely to the discussions, because I believe one of the great benefits of these congresses is the chance to assess the weight of opinion.

My political experience has shown you often get a patchwork of opinions on most subjects. These opinions are generally sincere, but they can also be very different. Gauging which opinion represents a majority view is sometimes extremely hard.

And sometimes, when there isn't a majority view held, it's just as difficult to know which opinion is the right one to believe in.

But in each of these cases, rational discussion and consultation are the keynotes if there's to be any chance of success.

Your agenda includes some fairly contentious issues and I expect these will be well covered over the congress. I look forward to reading the outcome of the debates.

Later this morning, there'll be an address by someone I'm sure you all know, Mr Ric Marshall, the Director of the Vietnam Veterans' Counselling Service. Among other things, he'll be giving you an update on the latest developments in the country outreach project.

You'll also be addressed by someone many of you won't be familiar with, and that's the new Secretary of the Department of Veterans' Affairs, Mr Lionel Woodward.

I say "new" only as a relative term: Lionel's been at the helm since late February, and he's put a lot of time and effort into coming to grips with the Department's enormous responsibilities.

An important way he's doing this is by compressing the years of knowledge accumulated in the ex-service community into readily-assimilated material through coming to functions such as this.

A few hours spent here - dare I say at front line of it all - is worth infinitely more than days of briefings and reams of reports in a Canberra office.

Reports and briefings are necessary tools of any bureaucracy - especially in one as big as the DVA, but although they are valuable, they cannot impart that special flavour - that indefinable factor - which sets each group apart from its peers.

Only by being here - by listening, absorbing and remembering - can one hope to come to grips with the unique nature of the group.

Of course, you in the VVAA see your group as being crucial to protecting the interests of your members. And although I know the Association is taken very seriously by the Department, you must remember that it is really just one of many such groups with which the Department - and the Secretary - deals on a daily basis.

There are thirty such major groups known to the Department - that is, groups with a national executive body and branches in at least four states. This collection includes bodies such as Legacy, the

Limbless Soldiers' Association, and the Royal Australian Air Force Women's Association.

These 'umbrella' groups have a common core of concerns for their members, but also can have unique demands and requests.

The success of each group's approaches to Government with their concerns depends on how well its case is stated, which in turn depends on how well it has been prepared.

Mass meetings of members - such as the assembly here today - can play an important part in framing cases and forming approaches.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs is one Department which I believe is extremely receptive to well-thought out submissions: the evidence of this can be measured by success.

You'd all be aware that the Government agreed to build a memorial to Vietnam veterans in ANZAC Parade, in Canberra. What you may not know is that the Government will give \$200,000 towards the memorial's cost, on top of allocating a site.

I'm sure most Vietnam veterans will applaud this decision, which is a good example of what concerned groups can achieve.

But it is not the only one. Look at the progress on the country outreach project, the crisis telephone line, and the emergency accomodation.

Lionel Woodward and Ric Marshall will tell you more about these later, but I wanted to mention them as exemplifying the process of Government/ex-service group consultation.

National meetings are always great for meeting old mates, and catching up with people you've not seen for a while, but this is not why they're held.

The results of this congress - whatever they are - could have an impact on a lot of people, for a long while to come. It is not only an important function for you as VVAA members, but will also mould opinion in the general community about the VVAA.

So, in closing, I wish you well in your deliberations, and trust the decisions you arrive at will be able to be carried forward for the benefit of all veterans and thier families.

Thank you very much.

Address by Ric Marshall
10th National Congress VVAA
Perth 6 May 1989

Mr President, ~~Mr~~ Gear, Mr Woodward, Distinguished Guests,
Delegates

Thank you for your invitation to your congress and for asking me to speak to you again on the work of the Vietnam Veterans Counselling Service.

Delegates have heard from me as National Director of the VVCS at previous National Congresses and today you have already heard Mr Gear mention on behalf of the Minister for Veterans Affairs some of the things being done by the Government through the VVCS.

My new boss Lionel Woodward, has also provided you with the benefit of his first impressions in the role of Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs and I find it most encouraging that, in spite of all the horrifying stories of how tough the VVAA is to deal with and how inclined it is to cross swords with the Department, he has come to this congress to find out for himself what the VVAA is on about. I also have found it most encouraging to observe how quickly he has gone about confronting the fears about the future of the Department and providing the reassurances that are necessary in this climate about the future of the Department and the continuity of special services for veterans and their families.

I have now been National Director of the VVCS for 4 years after working as it were "up close" to veterans and their families with problems of one sort or another and being National Director has given me a chance to stand back a little while helping to keep the Service maintained and supplied. Counselling veterans and their families has always been in my experience an privilege. As you probably know, I was not in SVN - I was rejected for National Service on medical grounds - a skin disorder. It is somewhat ironical and really brings home to me now how lucky I was when I now find that many of the clients I deal with suffer worse skin complaints than I ever did! And other problems as well.

I guess that what I am talking about is that there is clearly a cost to war service, and an obligation on those of us in the community who didn't have to serve in Vietnam to care about and care for those who did in the same way as veterans care about their mates. We also owe continuing of gratitude and respect. As John Parsons - a director of the American Vet Centre project says - "you can never say thanks often enough".

So from me to you who went on my behalf and those you represent -
THANK YOU - IT'S A PRIVILEGE TO BE WORKING WITH YOU.

Now on to the VVCS

As we all know the VVCS was set up "to help veterans and their families with their health and social problems". It was set up specially for Vietnam veterans but we have never turned any veteran away. What are the needs?

As I see them - and it's often good to reconsider what the job is so that we can see how we are going - to do the job we have got to provide:-

- . an approachable service that the veteran knows they can rely on. People need to be wanted/valued - not be treated like a nuisance.
- . a service that meets veterans and their families at their point of need - that includes a willingness to do the simple practical things to allow the person come to grips with the underlying problem - forms, phone calls, roof overhead.
- . a service that deals with first things first - defuses immediate sore points - provides a space to get the heat out of the situation - deals with the now crisis and THEN
- . counselling to help adjust to relationships, anxiety-stress issues, anger, self esteem/efficacy, and perhaps uncover and allay some of the old hurts or horrors.
- . a recognition of what else might help and encouragement and assistance to get it.

.....

So what are we doing

- . continuing to provide high quality (or so our clients tell us) counselling from centres
- . country outreach
 - . have trained Area Representatives at .Gold Coast, .Port Macquarie, .MacKay/Cairns/MtIsa, .Bendigo/SwanHill/Mildura..
 - . are preparing for training for .AliceSprings/Gove/TennantCreek, .NWTasmania, .Wagga/SouthCoastNSW, .Gippsland, .Goldfields/SW-WA ...

Encouraging to hear from Frank Hunt who has been carrying this sort of work almost single handed in his area for nearly 15 years that he is now getting a sense of "the weight lifting off his shoulders". Well, I suppose its about time!

. 008 Services both to Centres and after hours

- . we have the long standing Adelaide arrangement that Grant pioneered
- . Aug - Oct 88 Sydney training - 008 opened Nov 88 - NSW/ACT pilot - dealt with 50 calls per month - 5 being severe crises
- . extending to SQ, NQ, NT, Country SA, VIC, TAS, ACT, WA. Implementing 008 line, redial, beepers.
- . The backup from Salvo Line & Crisis Care in particular has been fantastic.

. The Veterans Emergency Accommodation Grants Scheme

- . Angus House - is now a proven fact - a pilot that has truly been worthy of the name - full credit to Jim Muir who conceived it - John Thompson who adopted it at birth and Ray De Vere who provided the discipline it needed at adolescence. And now full credit to the RSL for coming in like grandparents often do and providing for a permanent home. Truly a remarkable team effort.
- . As mentioned earlier, the Government has now provided \$400,000 to get others going.
- . the VEAGS Steering Committee has had 2 meetings
 - . grants recommended in WA, NT and now SA
 - . proposals are being considered from ACT
 - . potential proposals being developed in NSW and Vic
 - . Tas considering now bush retreat is underway

Veterans Own Initiatives

They are worth listing - a record of impressive achievements - for a group that 10 years ago didn't even have their own association and were not a strong part of any others:-

Just a few things that come to mind:-

- . district barbecues, the Royal Commission, Vetfit, Sports Teams, Welcome Home Parades and Reunions, Joblink, National Memorial, Published Books, Small Business Advisory Group, Legal Advisory Service, Advocacy, VV Family Support Link Line, VV Council, Austasian children initiatives, Keith Payne Hostel, VV Trust, Special Regimental Events - Long Tan, Coral, Vietnamese/VV joint activities, Bush Retreat, Farm Placements, Research Projects including the recently published Field and Kerr Study, SA Veterans Crisis Line, and not forgetting that the VVCS itself was a Vietnam veterans initiative...

The list goes on and bears no resemblance whatsoever to the mad Rambo time bomb, or angry demanding emotional cripple image so often bandied around. It in fact demonstrates a group of competent, effective and successful people with strong bonds - still caring for one another and contributing in an exemplary way to the community around them and to the Nation they served. |

There's more to be done but a lot has been achieved.
Congratulations!

There are also the excellent personal contributions of individuals in the VVAA and other veteran organisations. Everyone here is here because of such contributions but I would like especially to compliment your President, Tim McCombe. Tim is a member of the National Advisory Committee on the VVCS where he contributes energetically and constructively to discussions on how the VVCS should operate. He is also a highly respected advocate, lobbyist and spokesman for veterans and their families. Thanks Tim.

The VVCS has been proud and privileged to be part of the things I have been speaking about and we look forward to serving veterans and their families in these ways as a special part of the Veterans Affairs Portfolio for as long as it is needed.

Thank You.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

MAY 1989

Since the formation of the Vietnam Veteran's Association ten years ago there have been major gains achieved for the Vietnam Veterans by this Association. Some of these achievements are:-

- . Alerted the government to the unhappy plight of so many of our Vietnam Veterans.
- . Convinced the government of the day, of the need for the formation of the Vietnam Veteran's Counselling Services.
- . Made representations which convinced the Parliament to pass an amendment to the Repatriation Act in order to upgrade the repatriation entitlements of Vietnam Veterans to the same levels as those of WWII veterans.
- . Convinced the government of the need for a Royal Commission into the matter of toxic chemicals.
- . Identified the need for Half Way houses for veterans in crisis and initiated the establishment of Angus House in Brisbane.

- . Have had some success with sponsoring cancer claims in the repatriation system, based on exposure to chemicals.

More recently, when the Government accepted the recommendations of the Evatt and Hogg reports, we have achieved:-

- . An increase of the Vietnam Veteran's Counselling Service staff, by six, and an extension of the services, by providing one thousand hours a year of counselling in country areas.
- . Four hundred thousand dollars allotted by the Government, for the establishment of Half Way Houses/Hostels in capital cities, for veterans in crisis.
- . A donation of two hundred thousand dollars towards the Vietnam Veterans' War Memorial to be built in Canberra.
- . Declaration of a Vietnam Veterans Day on the Anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan (18 August).

Another major achievement was when the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Community Affairs tabled its report titled "After the March". It is pleasing that many of our ^{PROPOSALS} ~~submissions~~ are included in that report. It is an excellent report. Amongst its report recommendations are:-

- . Guaranteed independence of the Counselling Service by making it a Statutory Authority.

- . The extension of the Counselling Service into country areas to get underway without delay.
- . Examine the possibility of free-of-charge, 24 hour-a-day, crisis telephone counselling services, in all states.
- . Greater government assistance for the establishment of half way houses like ANGUS HOUSE, in all states.
- . Government support for programmes modelled on the Western Australia "Job Link".
- . Government employment preference for Vietnam Veterans.
- . A research officer to work with the Counselling Service, to keep up with the latest toxic chemical studies.
- . More staff.

It is interesting to note that the Minister has yet to reply to the recommendation of the report, six months after the report has been tabled, despite a three months statutory obligation to report to parliament.

THE CHEMICAL ISSUE

We have a number of cases before the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, in Victoria, (one case) and in NSW (two cases), relating to exposure to toxic chemicals. I hope these cases will be finalised before the end of this year. The Victorian case was due to be heard by the Tribunal on the 10th and 11th April, but due to the unavailability of the barrister it had to be adjourned.

I have now become involved as an advocate to the Veterans' Review Board specialising in cancer cases. I have had two cases heard before the Board (one was a joint preparation with Legacy) and I am still awaiting the decisions. I have a case listed for hearing and another six cases awaiting specialist reports.

There have been a number of developments in the area of studies concerning child abnormalities in the children of Vietnam Veterans. The Kerr/Field Study on children of Tasmanian Veterans and the change of mind by the scientist conducting the "Ranch Hand" studies are of major consequences.

THE NATIONAL OFFICE

Since the advertisement in "Debrief" for voluntary workers, I have now, five part-time workers assisting in the office. The backlog of filing has been reduced to a minimum. It will now be possible to resume, on a regular monthly basis, an information package to be sent to the states.

During the past year, in my capacity as the National President, I have made twenty one trips to Canberra, three trips to Melbourne, three trips to Wyong and one trip to Wollongong. A total of twenty-eight trips. (Extracted from the diary).

The finances of the National Office are in a healthy state. Notwithstanding this, the office is operating without a photostat machine, typewriter and typist. The typing for the office is done by voluntary workers outside the office.

WAR VETERANS RALLY

I was approached by a group of RSL sub-branches to help organize a meeting of war veterans at the Sydney Town Hall. The purpose of the meeting was to voice their concerns on the reduction of benefits to veterans.

It was agreed that the meeting was not to be seen as having been arranged by any particular organisation but by individual veterans.

The meeting was a great success, with over two thousand people attending; also it received plenty of media coverage.

EVATT REVISITED CONFERENCE
AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

ABOUT

This conference of which I spoke, on Saturday, was a great success. I was included on the organising committee but it was basically organised by scientists from ANU who were concerned by the way Justice Evatt treated scientific evidence.

SUBMISSIONS

The National Office has been involved in producing four submissions relating to the Monitoring Committee Report.

THE FUTURE

1. The Association must maintain the political pressure on the government for their acceptance of the recommendations contained in the "After the March" report.
2. There are now four cases that have been won at the Veterans Review Board relating to chemical exposure and cancer. There are three cases at the AAT and a number either ready to be heard by the VRB, or at the stage of preparation to be listed for hearing. The VWAA must maintain a high profile in this area.

3. Since the study of Field and Kerr has been released and the change of mind by the scientist conducting the "Ranch Hand" Study, the VVAA must maintain political pressure to have the children that suffer from birth defects be made eligible for benefits under the Veteran Entitlement Act.
4. VVAA must look at the training of advocates to the Veterans Review Board. This may be done by running courses.
5. A watch must be kept on the Department of Veterans Affairs relating to any move which would interfere with the independence of the Veterans Review Board.
6. Establishment of half way houses in every state.

In conclusion I have been involved with the VVAA since 1981. There are a number of items that I wish to see completed so I have decided to seek re-election for National President and I believe that my qualifications for my re-election are:-

- . Involvement with the issues for eight years
- . Because of this involvement I now have a vast contact within the scientific community. This has been further broadened since the Evatt Revisited Conference. (John Pollock, George Humphries, Ben Selinger, Red Steele, Peter McCullagh, Prof Axleson, Prof Hardell etc.)

Over the years I have established a network of lawyers who are willing to work for us, free of charge (Bob Wyburn, Alun Hill, Steve Crawshaw, Adrian McInness etc).

My involvement with the National Advisory Council which advises the Minister on matters relating to the WVCS have given me a broad knowledge of the operation of the counselling services.

I have a good relationship with the Minister for Veteran's Affairs in spite of policy differences. I also have a good relationship with Tim Fishcher MHR, Senator Paul McLean who are both the shadow spokesmen on Veteran's Affairs for their parties.

I have a good relationship with many back benchers including the National Secretary of ALP Bob Hogg (who is presently seeking an appointment for us to see the Prime Minister.)

My knowledge of the chemical issue which I am now putting to use at the VRB.

- . I am a TPI pensioner and I have the time to work on a full time basis. Also, I believe the President of the Association should be based in a major city.
- . I have established a good relationship with many sections of the press.

Yours faithfully

Tim McCombe
National President