

VIETNAM VETERANS ASSOCIATION of AUSTRALIA
16th NATIONAL CONGRESS

Held at the Canberra International Hotel

on

27th and 28th May 1995

MINUTES

The President declared the meeting open at 9-10 A.M.

PRESENT

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE

National President: John Printz
National Senior Vice President: Rob Cox
National Junior Vice President: Jim Talbert
National Secretary: Geoff Trevor-Hunt

The National Treasurer was not present

DELEGATES

ACT: Clive Mitchell-Taylor, Bob Shearing
QLD: Pat Wittig (with second vote proxy)
SA: Geoff Campbell, Doc Russell
VIC: Alan Hughes, John Methven
NT: Garry Casey, Eddie Josephs
WA: Rob Cox, Sandy Coutts
TAS: Brian McKenzie, Malcolm Merrick

It was noted that no New South Wales Delegates were present.

OBSERVERS

Graham Shard (Maryborough Sub Branch), Ursula Schroedl (ACT Branch), Margaret Wine (ACT Branch),
Trevor-Hunt (Wangaratta Sub Branch), Stuart Weller (ACT Branch), Damian Ley (Murray Border Assn)

1.0 MINUTES

Proposed: WA

Seconded: VIC

That the minutes as distributed be received. **CARRIED**

2.0 BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES:

2.1 SINGLE VIETNAM MEDAL

Item 7.10 - MEDALS - is to be followed up by the National Executive.

3.0 CORRESPONDENCE

3.1 RESIGNATION of NSW STATE BRANCH

This is to be followed up later in the day.

3.2 ANTI CANCER COUNCIL

Deferred to General Business

3.3 MINISTER

Grant in Aid was has been increased by \$6000 to \$12000 per year

Proposed: VIC

Seconded: QLD

That a special letter of thanks be sent to the Minister for Veterans Affairs. **CARRIED**

3.4 RESEARCH and MANAGEMENT of PROSTATE CANCER

As Attached and distributed to members present.

3.5 AUTONOMY of the VVCS

The National President had written to the Minister in regards to the maintaining the Autonomy of the VVCS. Letter attached.

3.6 NATIONAL CAPITAL PLANNING AUTHORITY

Letter in regards to the Audit of Lighting on Anzac Parade in Canberra.
It was resolved that the ACT Branch follow this up.

3.7 HOSPITAL in VINH LONG

Letter from Dr B. F. George in regards to support for the building of a hospital in Vinh Long, Vietnam.
It was resolved that this is outside our Constitution and Dr George is to be advised of this.

3.8 GENDER EQUALITY on COMMONWEALTH BOARDS.

Letter from Dr Alan Hawke in regards to Government Policy on Gender Equality on Commonwealth Boards.

Proposed: VIC

Seconded: WA

That Dr Hawke be advised that the VVAA would be happy to nominate women, should they be suitable for the job. **CARRIED**

3.9 ACCEPTANCE of CORRESPONDENCE

Proposed: QLD

Seconded: TAS

That the correspondence, as tabled and distributed, be received. **CARRIED**

4.0. REPORTS

4.1 NATMOC

Report attached by National Secretary

4.2 KOC

John Printz reported that the KOC meets twice per year. Clive Mitchell-Taylor attended the last meeting and this was reported on by Clive. The next meeting is on 25th October 1995.

A question arose as to what the KOC were doing about the Vietnam End of War List.

Proposed: VIC

Seconded: ACT

That a new joint submission on the End of War List, in conjunction with the RSL, be submitted. **CARRIED**

4.3 MORTALITY STUDY

The progress on this study was reported on by the National Secretary (attached).

Concerns were raised by John Methven that the Mortality Study should be in conjunction with the Morbidity Study.

Proposed: VIC

Seconded: WA

That the VVAA write to the Minister and advise him of our grave concern that a Morbidity Study of Vietnam veterans is not being carried out in parallel with the Mortality Study. Also that the issue of Birth Defects has been ignored.

CARRIED

4.4 NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The National Advisory Committee was reported on by John Printz

4.5 AVADSC

Reported on by Jim Talbert. Report attached.

4.6 PTSD STEERING COMMITTEE

Reported on by John Printz. The RSL was represented by Colleen Thurgar and the VVAA represented by John Printz. John had taken Jim Talbert to the meetings as an observer the last few times. The aim of the committee is to put in place the National PTSD Program and to oversee it. There were problems in the program which have to be worked through. Any State problems with the Program are to be passed to the National Secretary.

5.0 OFFICIAL OPENING

The 16th National Congress was officially opened by the Chief Minister of the ACT, Kate Carnell who addressed the meeting. John Printz responded.

Dr Alan Hawke then addressed the meeting with John Printz responding. Dr Hawke then answered some questions from the floor.

6.0 NOTICES of MOTION

6.1 COMBINING THE POSITIONS OF NATIONAL SECRETARY and TREASURER

Proposed: WA

Seconded: QLD

Motion attached

This was discussed at length. Victoria suggested that one person can do the two tasks but they should not be joined constitutionally.

It was generally accepted that that the two positions not be merged but that one person can fill both positions.

MOTION LOST

6.2. PUBLICISING ACCEPTABLE CANCERS (Motion 1)

Proposed: TAS

Seconded VIC

Motion attached. **CARRIED**

6.3. SUPPORT FOR FAMILY SEMINARS (Motion 2)

Proposed: TAS

Seconded VIC

Motion attached.

The motion was discussed at length. Victoria spoke against the motion but supported the concept. It was suggested that if this sort of precedent was set then this could disrupt other Branches or Sub Branches Vietnam Veterans Day. This motion was amended with the addition of "to be planned in conjunction with the National Executive"

The motion, as amended was **CARRIED**.

6.4 ASSOCIATION FLAG

Proposed: VIC

Seconded: TAS

That the National Body arrange for the production of an Association Flag for use by Sub Branches. Such item to be purchased by the Sub Branches. **CARRIED**

Victoria are to investigate costs associated with the production of the flag and report back to the National Executive.

7.0 GENERAL BUSINESS

7.1. NATIONAL CONSTITUTION

Proposed: VIC

Seconded: NT

That the National Executive redraft the National Constitution within four months of this National Congress.
CARRIED

7.1 1996 NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING

Tasmania requested that the 1996 National Council be held in Tasmania to coincide with the Vietnam Veterans Family Reunion in August 1996.

It was resolved that this decision be postponed to a later date.

7.2. AGED CARE POLICY

Insufficient time had been allowed for the Delegates to read the policy but John Methven explained that our requirements must be in the policy.

7.3. VETERANS CHARTER

Proposed: VIC

Seconded: TAS

That the VVAA set up a working party to examine the feasibility of creating a Veterans Charter to enshrine Veterans rights for the future and that this be done in consultation with other Veterans Organisations.

CARRIED.

7.4 BUDGET PAPERS and IMPLICATIONS

PTSD.

John Methven advised the meeting that PTSD will be treated by DVA after 1 July 1995, even if it has not been accepted as a war caused disability by DVA. It was noted that this can only happen if PTSD is diagnosed by a Doctor. The VVAA is to pursue a request for similar treatment acceptance for alcohol and drug abuse which are related to PTSD.

SERVICE PENSION

The refusing of Service Pensions for wives under aged 50 was considered unfair to Vietnam Veterans. DVA considers that the Carers Pension can be given in lieu of the Service Pension. It appears that if the Veteran is granted TPI status then the partner cannot qualify for any Social Security Benefits. This is to be the subject of a Workshop on Sunday.

RESEARCH

No allowance has been given in the monies allocated for research into Birth Defect research nor any allowance for Neuro Toxic Trials.

7.5 DEBRIEF

After lengthy discussion it was agreed that States should be canvassed as to the contents of Debrief and that the first issue after Congress should cover all allegations against States and the National Executive. The issue is to explain what is in membership of the VVAA for the members.

As John Methven will not be able to continue, ACT were asked if they could produce Debrief. ACT to investigate and report back to the National Executive.

7.6 COST SHARING

Proposed: QLD

Seconded: WA

That all Congress accommodation and air fares be organised by the National Secretary and that Delegates costs be shared equally by all States, including the host State. States are responsible for full accommodation costs. • **CARRIED**

7.7. DEFENCE SERVICE HOME LOAN

As directed by the 1994 National Congress, Jim Talbert had made a submission to the Minister and the Minister's reply was distributed to Delegates.

John Methven stated that MACOVI were informed that the Government had no intention of changing the amount.

Northern Territory raised the point that Westpac Loan Contracts had a clause which allowed adjustment of the DSHL Interest rate. This matter is to be investigated by the Executive.

7.8. INSURANCE DISCRIMINATION

The Minister had asked DVA to approach the Life Insurance Federation and, to date, no reply had been received. This is to be followed up by another letter.

7.9. HISTORY of the VVAA

John Methven has a large amount of information but, due to NSW running a similar series in their magazine, had not proceeded. The Congress was further advised that NSW had failed to supply any information.

7.10 ANTI CANCER COUNCIL

The Anti Cancer Council are having their Daffodil day on 18th August 1995. A letter from the Victorian Anti Cancer Council was distributed to members.

Proposed: VIC

Seconded: WA

That the National Executive write to the National Body of the Anti Cancer Council. CARRIED

7.11 NURSES MEMORIAL

A letter had been received from the Royal College of Nursing, Australia, in regards to the construction of a National memorial for nurses.

It was resolved that this be referred to the National Executive for investigation.

7.12. REIMBURSEMENT OF MEDICO LEGAL COSTS

A letter was received from Mr John MacArthur, Orthopaedic Surgeon, in regards to the inability of some Veterans being unable to pay for Medico Legal expenses in regards to a claim and asked if it was possible for accounts to be sent direct to DVA..

Referred to the National Executive.

7.14. LOGO LEGAL FEES

Proposed: TAS

Seconded: SA

That the amount of \$4695 for legal fees involved with the registration of the Logo be paid. CARRIED

8.0 MATTERS RAISED BY STATE DELEGATES

8.1. BIRTH DEFECTS (SA)

South Australia stated that Dependents of Veterans should be looked after. SA were informed that the Birth Defects issue has been put to the Minister who has stated that it would be done.

8.2. AGENT ORANGE (SA)

South Australia stated that the Official History of the Vietnam War should be changed where it states that Agent Orange had no effect. The meeting was advised that legal action may be pending on the issue from other persons in regards to defamation. VVAA still to follow the issue up.

8.3. PROPOSED CD ROM PROGRAM (SA)

A proposal to produce a program "Australians at War" had been received by SA Branch requesting support. Copies were distributed to delegates.

Proposed: ACT

Seconded: SA

That the VVAA is unable to endorse a product which does not exist, but is happy to provide information and input to the CD on request. **CARRIED**

8.4 LIFE MEMBERSHIP - Frank ALCORTA

Proposed: NT

Seconded: ACT

That Frank Alcorta be granted National Life Membership. **CARRIED**

8.5. CHARITY STATUS (ACT)

ACT questioned whether the VVAA was a recognised Charity for the purposes of Tax Deductibility for donation etc. The Executive were unable to answer due to the fact that the Treasurer was not present and no papers were available. This matter will be pursued.

8.6. CARD (ACT)

ACT were authorised by the 1994 Congress to produce cards for use by the Association. This had been done but, despite requests, no numbers had been received from most States.

The cards were distributed to National and to State Delegates with accounts from the ACT to follow.

8.7. GOVERNMENT OPPOSITION POLICY (VIC)

Victoria questioned whether the Government Opposition policy was available and stated that there was a need to know their policy.

It was suggested that the National Executive follow this up.

8.8. COMPUTER LINK (VIC)

Victoria suggested that the National Executive investigate the cost of Computer Linking the National Executive.

Proposed: SA

Seconded: TAS

That Victoria investigate the costs etc. of computer linking the National Executive. **CARRIED**

8.9. CONFERLINK

Proposed: QLD

Seconded: SA

That the National hold quarterly conferences by Telstra Conferlink.

South Australia had co-operation with the State DVA office on the possibility of using Conferlink.

Victoria spoke against the motion and said there would be no personal connection. **MOTION LOST**

9.0. TREASURERS REPORT

Due to the absence of the National Treasurer, an interim report was presented and distributed by the National Secretary who was currently acting as Treasurer.

Proposed: SA

Seconded: TAS

That the interim unaudited Treasurers Report be received. **CARRIED**

Nev Varley's position was discussed and it was noted that at 5-00 P.M. he was still not present at the meeting.

10.0. NSW RESIGNATION

Proposed: SA

Seconded: ACT

That the letter of resignation from the NSW State Branch be accepted. **CARRIED.**

This is to be notified to NSW in writing.

11.0. SECRETARY'S REPORT

The National Secretary presented his report both verbally and in writing.

Proposed: QLD

Seconded: TAS

That the National Secretary's Report as presented be received. **CARRIED.**

12.0. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Proposed: QLD

Seconded: That the Presidents Report be received. **CARRIED**

Meeting Adjourned 5-35 P.M.

Meeting Reconvened at 9-05 Sunday 28th May

Was noted that Nev Varley was not present nor had any response been received from a fax sent at 11-53 A.M. Saturday.

The National President declared all positions vacant and asked the meeting if there were any objection to Jim Talbert taking the chair for the elections as Jim was not standing for re-election. This was agreed to.

13.0. ELECTIONS

No nominations had been received in writing for the position of National President, therefore nominations were called for from the floor.

NATIONAL PRESIDENT: John Methven Proposed by VIC Seconded by QLD. No other nominations
John Methven declared elected.

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT: One nomination received, Rob Cox. Rob Cox declared duly elected.

JUNIOR VICE PRESIDENT: One nomination received, Garry Casey. Garry Casey declared duly elected.

NATIONAL SECRETARY: One nomination received, Geoff Trevor-Hunt. Geoff Trevor-Hunt declared duly elected.

NATIONAL TREASURER: No nomination had been received, therefore nominations were called from the floor.
Clive Mitchell-Taylor nominated by NT and Seconded by VIC. No other nominations Clive Mitchell Taylor declared duly elected.

PUBLIC OFFICER: Jim Talbert Proposed by NT Seconded by ACT. Jim Talbert declared duly elected.

NATIONAL SOLICITOR: Peter Liefman Proposed by VIC Seconded by NT. Peter Liefman declared duly elected.

NATIONAL AUDITOR: Deferred to National Executive meeting.

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT: John Printz automatically in this position for twelve months.

President John Methven took the chair for the remainder of the meeting.

The President thanked the members for their confidence in him and thanked John Printz for his efforts over the last two years.

The National President advised State Delegates to ensure that all information is passed on to members.

14.0. STATE REPORTS

All State Reports are as attached.

15.0. GENERAL BUSINESS (Continued)

15.1. HONORARY LIFE MEMBERSHIP

Norm Robertson addressed the meeting about the proposal of Life Membership for Jim Greenwood.

Proposed: Norm Robertson

Seconded: WA

That Jim Greenwood be awarded Honorary Life Membership of the VVAA. **CARRIED**

15.2. NEW SOUTH WALES MEMBERSHIP

Proposed: VIC

Seconded: WA

That members from NSW who wish to remain affiliated to the National VVAA have their current financial membership honoured until the subscription becomes due and that they be advised that their \$5 Capitation could be requested back from the group known as the VVAA (NSW Branch). **CARRIED**

Proposed: VIC

Seconded: WA

That the National Executive manage the recreation of a NSW State Branch as soon as possible with the aim of representation for members at National Council and Congress. **CARRIED**

ADJOURNED for Wreath Laying at the National Memorial at 10-45 A.M.

Reconvened at 11-40 A.M.

WORKSHOPS

The meeting was now attended by Felicity Barr, David Watson, Neil Bayles, Wes Kilham (all DVA) and Ian McLennan of the RMA.

Wes Kilham (Principal Director, VVCS) addressed the meeting and, in particular, spoke about the clinical review (copies issued to Delegates on Saturday). State Delegates raised questions which were particular to their State and replies received.

Neil Bayles addressed the meeting on the new rules for Service Pension for wives/partners under 50 years of age. It was pointed out by Delegates that a partner of a TPI could be disqualified from receiving a Job Search or other Social Security pension. It was further pointed out that this action on the Service Pension was discriminatory to Vietnam Veterans.

John Methven questioned whether any Ex Service Organisation had been consulted prior to any decision on the Service Pension was made. Neil replied that there was no consultation.

The VVAA are to continue to push for this legislation to be changed and the Carer's Pension criteria be eased to allow partners of, in particular, PTSD sufferers to obtain such pension.

David Watson addressed the meeting on the Younger Veterans Package, in particular, Rehabilitation. When questioned, David Watson stated that the "Safety Net" on the rehabilitation program included an automatic fall back to the TPI Rate of pension.

Vigorous questioning of all DVA participants was evident throughout the workshops.

15.3. 1996 CONGRESS

Proposed: TAS

Seconded: NT

That the 1996 National Congress be held in Western Australia on 25/26 May 1996. **CARRIED**

15.4. TAPING OF MEETINGS

Proposed: SA

Seconded: QLD

That, with the exception of the National Secretary who must tape the meeting, meeting cannot be taped but, at the Presidents discretion, guest speakers may be taped by other members.

CARRIED with 8 FOR and 5 AGAINST

15.5. MEDIA INFORMATION

It was resolved that the National Executive investigate media releases (Monitoring Australia). A Press Clipping service is also to be investigated.

15.6. MOBILE PHONE

The Immediate Past President requested that he be allowed to purchase the mobile phone currently used by him. This was referred to the National Executive.

15.7. NATIONAL TREASURER'S BOOKS

Proposed: SA
Seconded: WA

That the National executive be empowered to investigate a method of obtaining the books of account and other equipment from Nev Varley. **CARRIED**

15.8 AVWVT REPORT

Norm Robertson presented his report on the activities of the AVWVT and distributed the Annual Report to Delegates.

15.9. NATIONAL REGISTER

Proposed: WA
Seconded: VIC

That a National Register of Office Bearers, Welfare Officers, Pensions Officers, Advocates and other pertinent information be produced in booklet form. **CARRIED**

10. NATIONAL TIES

Proposed: SA
Seconded: WA

That the ties as produced by the Townsville Sub Branch be adopted as the Official National Tie. **CARRIED**

15.11. BANK ACCOUNTS

Proposed: ACT
Seconded: QLD

That the incoming National Executive authorise the closure of the VVAA National Bank Account(s) and the transfer of any funds to the new account. **CARRIED**

The National President congratulated all members of Congress on the amount of work done during Congress. He thanked all members of the ACT State Branch for the organisation of the Congress in such a short time. He also thanked all observers for their attendance.

Wittig (QLD) endorsed the President's remarks.

The National President thanked the past Executive for their work.

The meeting was declared closed at 3-55 P.M.


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SECRETARY

.....
PRESIDENT