

CAROL

VIETNAM VETERANS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA
17th NATIONAL CONGRESS

**Held at the Freeway Hotel, South Perth, WA
on 25th and 26th May 1996**

MINUTES

The 17th National Congress was officially opened by the Governor of Western Australia Maj. Gen. Michael Jeffrey AO MC at 9-10 A.M.

The National President, John Methven, replied to the Governor's speech.

The Minister for Veterans Affairs, the Hon Bruce Scott, then addressed the meeting.

During his speech, the Minister passed his congratulations on for the Mobile Museum display. He stated that he, as Minister, and the Government would listen to the Association's concerns and see how they could be addressed. He, further, gave a commitment that the Government would meet the needs of the Vietnam Veterans so that they could cope with the social and psychological legacies of the Vietnam war.

He then stated that the Government was committed to maintaining the Repatriation Medical Authority, there would be some changes to the Department of Veterans Affairs but, these would be in the way programs were delivered and that the Department would and all current benefits would be maintained but some anomalies would be looked at. The Department is to establish a rural and remote health policy for veterans.

He expected the Specialist review committee on Spina Bifida to report to him within the next 6 weeks.

The Minister then offered to answer questions, and his replies were:

1. That the Safety Net provisions for the rehabilitation scheme would be introduced into Parliament after the budget and before christmas (he did say that that it originally, was not high on the list of priorities, but now that he was aware of the importance of it, this would change.) He further committed to looking at funding the national Education package as soon as possible.
2. That where there is an established link with herbicides and pesticides then the RMA would be looking at this and the Government would not shirk in it's responsibility in this matter and that the RMA would not be given unlimited time to look at these matters.
3. If the inability to grant a Service Pension to a partner under 50 years of age was found to be an anomaly then this would be looked at. It was pointed out to the Minister that there was discrimination against Vietnam veterans, in particular, and also younger veterans.
4. That, in relation to the Mortality study, this current government would continue with the study where required and that there would definitely be a study into the mortality and health of female veterans.

Arthur Fittock stated that the RMA review had been delayed at the request of the President of the RSL. John Methven pointed out that the VVAA had agreed to the RMA subject to a review being conducted. Arthur pointed out that litigation currently in process would have an effect on the delay.

It was pointed out to the Minister that, in the area of domiciliary nursing care, the actual task had been taken away from registered nurses and given to home care and that these persons may not necessarily have the same qualifications and there were concerns that the care was being undermined. The departmental Secretary stated that an advisory committee was being set up to look into this matter.

PRESENT:

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE

NATIONAL PRESIDENT:	John Methven
NATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT:	Rob Cox
NATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT:	Garry Casey
NATIONAL SECRETARY:	Geoff Trevor-Hunt
NATIONAL TREASURER:	Clive Mitchell-Taylor
IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT:	John Printz OAM
NATIONAL SOLICITOR:	Peter Liefman

DELEGATES

QUEENSLAND:	John Smith, Bob Beasley
WESTERN AUSTRALIA:	Rob Cox, Pete Ramsay BEM
NORTHERN TERRITORY:	Garry Casey, John Sheppard
TASMANIA:	Malcolm Merrick, Brian McKenzie
SOUTH AUSTRALIA:	"Doc" Russell, Bert Newell
VICTORIA:	Alan Hughes, Kevin Hunter
NEW SOUTH WALES:	Jim Talbert
AUST CAPITAL TERRITORY:	Clive Mitchell-Taylor

1.0. PROXY VOTING

Proposed: WA

Seconded: NT

That the delegates for New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory be granted a second vote as a proxy. **CARRIED**

2.0. PREVIOUS MINUTES

Proposed: VIC

Seconded: TAS

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

3.0. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

3.1. ASSOCIATION FLAG

Victoria reported that Association Flags (white with coloured logo, screenprinted) could cost approximately \$200. A letter is to be written to all States with this information.

3.2. MEDICO LEGAL COSTS

It was explained that DVA were now paying the refund within 28 days in at least two states. States where this is not happening are to notify the National Secretary.

3.3. CHARITY STATUS

The secretary reported that no information had been found.

Proposed: WA
Seconded: QLD

That charity status be applied for as well as sales tax exemption. **CARRIED**

3.4. NSW NATIONAL OFFICE

The situation with the National Council office in NSW was explained by John Methven and Jim Talbert and the congress was advised that things were progressing.

Proposed: VIC
Seconded: SA

That the National executive no longer pursue reconciliation with the Granville office but that the door be left open. **CARRIED**

3.5. PREVIOUS NATIONAL TREASURER

The situation was explained by Clive Mitchell-Taylor and that the option may well be court action which is expensive.

Proposed: ACT
Seconded: NT

That a legal letter be written to Nev Varley in an attempt to recover outstanding amounts. **CARRIED**

3.6. TASMANIAN REUNION

Proposed: NSW
Seconded: NT

That this Congress reaffirms its support for the Tasmanian Vietnam Veterans Family Reunion. **CARRIED**

3.7. BANNERETTES

Victoria produced a quote but had another avenue to explore. This item is to be included in the same letter as the flags.

3.8. GRANT IN AID

The congress was reminded that submissions for Grants in Aid are to be submitted on time.

Gary Kent (Ministers Advisors) told the congress that these grants should be available after the Budget in August.

4.0. CORRESPONDENCE

Proposed: WA
Seconded: VIC

That the correspondence as read and tabled be received. **CARRIED**

5.0. REPORTS

5.1. KOC

Proposed: SA

Seconded: NT

That the KOC report be received. **CARRIED**

5.2. MORTALITY STUDY

Proposed: WA

Seconded: TAS

That the Mortality Report be accepted. **CARRIED**

5.3. NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Reported on by John Printz, verbally.

Proposed: ACT

Seconded: VIC

That the NAC report be received. **CARRIED**

5.4. HEALTH STUDY

Draft questionnaires were distributed to delegates.

All parts of the sample questionnaire were discussed in detail and amendments suggested, where necessary. All these amendments are to be taken to the Health Study Advisory Committee by the VVAA representative on the Committee (John Methven).

HEALTH STUDY INDIVIDUAL QUESTIONNAIRE

The proposed questionnaire to be distributed to ALL veterans was discussed in detail. It was stated that this had no real link to the questionnaire as originally proposed by the National Executive and that it should not deal with specific disabilities.

A committee was formed to look at issues and report back to the Congress on Sunday.

5.5. AVADSC

Reported on by Jim Talbert

Proposed: TAS

Seconded: NT

That the report as presented be accepted. **CARRIED**

5.6. AVWVT

Reported on by Jim Talbert

Proposed: ACT

Seconded: WA

That the report as presented be accepted. **CARRIED**

5.7. VITA

Reported on by Clive Mitchell-Taylor.

Proposed: QLD

Seconded: NSW

That the report be received. **CARRIED**

5.8. PTSD STEERING COMMITTEE

Presented by John Printz, verbally.

Proposed: WA

Seconded: NT

That the report as presented be received. **CARRIED**

5.9. WELFARE REPORT

Presented by John Printz, verbally.

The difference between welfare and pensions was explained to the congress.

John Printz had not received enough returns for registration of Welfare/Pensions officers for the purposes of Insurance coverage.

It is hoped that States will ensure that the registration be improved.

John spoke about TIP training and said that, by now, the standard of claims being submitted should have improved.

Welfare/Pensions officers must be kept up to date on information which affects their work. Once accredited under VITA, attempts would be made for the DVA to send pertinent information direct to the officer.

John suggested that the VVAA request that MACOVI Compensation workshops be continued.

At this stage it was suggested that more effort be put into the grass roots area of Pensions and Welfare.

Proposed: WA

Seconded: QLD

That the welfare report be received. **CARRIED**

5.10. TREASURER's REPORT

Proposed: CLIVE MITCHELL-TAYLOR

Seconded: NT

That the report as presented be received. **CARRIED**

5.11. SECRETARY's REPORT

Proposed: TAS

Seconded: SA

That the report as presented be received. **CARRIED**

5.12. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Proposed: VIC

Seconded: WA

That the report as presented be received. **CARRIED**

6.0. NOTICES OF MOTION

6.1. LIFE MEMBERSHIP

Proposed: TAS

Seconded: ACT

That the Constitution reflect one level of Life membership. **LOST**

6.2. LIFE MEMBERSHIP - John HAINES OAM

Proposed: NSW

Seconded: WA

That Mr John Haines OAM be nominated for Life Membership of the VVAA National Council. **CARRIED**

7.0. GENERAL BUSINESS:

7.1. NATIONAL CONSTITUTION.

Proposed: NT

Seconded: TAS

That the amended Constitution dated 25th May 1996 replace the Constitution issued in 1994. **CARRIED**

MEETING ADJOURNED SATURDAY 4-45 P.M.

MEETING RESUMED SUNDAY 9-00 A.M.

The National President declared all Executive positions vacant.

John Methven chaired the meeting for the elections

8.0. NATIONAL ELECTIONS

8.1. NATIONAL PRESIDENT:

Nominated: Clive Mitchell-Taylor. There being only one nomination, Clive Mitchell-Taylor was declared duly elected.

8.2. VICE PRESIDENTS (2):

Nominated: Rob Cox, Brian McKenzie, Jim Talbert.

Rob Cox and Brian McKenzie were duly elected by ballot.

8.3. NATIONAL SECRETARY

Nominated: Geoff Trevor-Hunt. There being only one nomination, Geoff Trevor-Hunt was declared duly elected.

8.4. NATIONAL TREASURER:

Nominated Peter Liefman. There being only one nomination, Peter Liefman was declared duly elected.

8.5. NATIONAL SOLICITOR:

Proposed: WA

Seconded TAS

That Peter Liefman be appointed as National Solicitor **CARRIED**

8.6. NATIONAL AUDITOR:

To be selected by the National Treasurer and approved by the National Executive.

8.7 PUBLIC OFFICER:

Proposed: NT

Seconded: SA

That Jim Talbert be appointed Public Officer for the Association. **CARRIED**

8.8. IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT:

John Methven

The new National President, Clive Mitchell-Taylor assumed the chair of the Congress and addressed the meeting.

Proposed: TAS

Seconded: WA

That the ballot papers be destroyed **CARRIED**

HEALTH QUESTIONNAIRE (RESUMED FROM SATURDAY)

A draft health questionnaire, developed by the Sub Committee on Saturday was presented to the meeting. This questionnaire was developed with questions relating to parts of the body, as defined in GARP IV but it was thought to be too difficult for the ordinary veteran to understand and too technical. The questionnaire is to be looked at further. The Congress was reminded that other Ex Service Organisations would have input to the questionnaire.

The National Executive is to continue with negotiations on the questionnaire.

6.0. NOTICES OF MOTION (Continued)

6.3. MEMORIAL IN VIETNAM

Proposed: NT

Seconded: QLD

That the Minister for Veterans Affairs be approached with a view to adding or altering their policy in respect of a memorial at Long Tan and, as, or instead, consult with the Vietnamese Government to have constructed, a memorial for all those who served, suffered and died in Vietnam.

MOTION LOST

6.4. RECRUITING CAMPAIGN

Proposed: TAS

Seconded: WA

That the VVAA National Council initiate a concerted campaign aimed at recruiting those Vietnam veterans who have never joined an Ex-service Organisation and those former members who, for some reason, have let their membership lapse. **CARRIED**

Brian McKenzie is appointed as the co-ordinator for the recruiting campaign with the power to co-opt.

7.0. GENERAL BUSINESS: (Continued)

7.2. USE OF THE LOGO

Permission of the logo is required from the National Secretary, the only exception being letterheads. (letter to States)

7.3. BADGES - SUPPLY OF

John Methven explained the origins and meaning of the badge. The design had been altered by the original designers. An article is to be put in Debrief in regards to the origins of the badge. Any further changes to the badge should be discussed by the National exe

The badge is to be supplied by the National Secretary and this is to be the only method of obtaining the lapel badges.

7.4. DEBRIEF

John Methven/Geoff Trevor-Hunt

The publication of Debrief could be done for free subject to information supply. It was agreed that this should be pursued and that three issues per year be tried.

7.5. MEMBERSHIP RECORDS AND DATABASE

To be dealt with under administrative matters.

7.6. PARTNERS AND FAMILIES SUB BRANCH - INTERSTATE MEMBERSHIP

This Sub Branch was formed to accommodate partners etc. of veterans. This Sub Branch had requested that interstate members be allowed to join their Sub Branch.

The congress was addressed by John Printz as to membership of partners.

7.7. UNITED STATES LIAISON OFFICERS

Proposed: WA

Seconded: VIC

That James K. Theriault and George Claxton be the USA Liaison Officers for this Association. **CARRIED**

Proposed: WA

Seconded: NT

That a letter of thanks be sent to Mick Scrase and that he be appointed the Chemical co-ordinator for the Association. **CARRIED**

7.8. USE OF PSYCHOLOGISTS FOR DIAGNOSIS

The Congress was informed that DVA would only accept diagnosis for PTSD from Psychiatrists and that there was a long waiting period for admittance to a psychiatrist.

This matter is to be taken up with the Department.

Adjourned for Lunch 12 Noon

Resumed at 1-00 P.M.

Tasmanian Delegates gave a presentation on the Vietnam Veterans Convention.

7.9. NATMOC REPRESENTATIVE

Proposed: VIC

Seconded: NT

That Rob Cox be the Association representative on NATMOC. **CARRIED**

7.10. MACOVI REPRESENTATIVE

Proposed: TAS

Seconded: WA

That John Methven be the representative on MACOVI and that transitional arrangements for the new National President be made with the Minister **CARRIED**.

7.11. INSURANCE

A presentation by Peter Liefman on Insurance packages with a percentage coming to the Association. The company will pay for advertisement in newsletters. Brochures and a paper on the company were given to delegates.

This matter is to be followed through by States. Peter Liefman is empowered to continue negotiations.

Proposed: NSW

Seconded: SA

That the proposal is accepted in principle and to be followed through. **CARRIED**

7.12. FUNDRAISING

Peter Liefman presented the Congress with a proposal with options for fundraising. It was felt that networking should be used in this matter.

Various ideas were presented. Peter Liefman, Jim Talbert and Brian McKenzie were authorised to investigate all aspects of fundraising in conjunction with the membership drive. States are requested to advise Peter Liefman on activities being undertaken and resources used within 30 days.

7.13. RPBS REVIEW

A letter had been received from Arthur Fittock that the Legacy/RSL member was representing us and information was not getting to this Association.

The National Secretary is to contact the appropriate DVA person in regards to information flow. To be raised by NATMOC.

7.13. ACCEPTANCE BY DVA OF CIVILIANS CONTRACTED TO DEPT OF DEFENCE.

A letter had been received from John Ali, a civilian contracted to the Dept of Defence and was requesting support for acceptance for disabilities by DVA.

John Printz was requested to investigate this matter and report to the National Executive.

9.0. ITEMS BY DELEGATES

9.1. QUEENSLAND - MIA's

The question of whether any attempt to have our MIA's remains returned to Australia was raised. It is possible that new attempts can be made by approaching the new minister. This is to be followed up by the National President.

9.2. QUEENSLAND - VOLUNTEER INSURANCE

The Insurance for Executives had been raised previously and had been left to States as rules were different State to State. This situation had not changed.

9.3. TASMANIA - USE OF MEMORIAL NAMES.

Requested as to whether the names could be used in Tasmania. Tasmania to contact War Graves.

9.4. SOUTH AUSTRALIA - LENGTH OF CONGRESS

The matter of reports being distributed prior to the Congress was raised and the President said that this would be attempted in future but the onus would be on the persons presenting the reports to have them in advance and that States should read them when received.

The length of the congress to be three days was discussed and it was suggested that Fridays and nights could also be used.

9.5. SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Bert Newell thanked the Congress and stated that as a new member he had enjoyed the congress.

9.6. NEW SOUTH WALES - START AND FINISH DATES FOR VIETNAM WAR.

Arthur Fittock stated that there was a ministerial review was currently in progress. This to followed be up.

9.7. NEW SOUTH WALES - DSH LOANS

Congress was asked if a further submission should be submitted.

Proposed: NSW

Seconded: VIC

That a further submission be put to the new Government for an increase in the DSH home loan amount. **CARRIED.**

9.8. NEW SOUTH WALES - VVCS REVIEW

NSW queried as to what had happened to the recommendations in the VVCS review. John Printz advised that the recommendations were proceeding at best speed as there were holdups within the VVCS.

9.9. NEW SOUTH WALES - NEW GARP V

Queried as to progress for the issue of the new GARP. This was replied to by Arthur Fittock, possibly being put to Parliament in August.

9.10. NEW SOUTH WALES - SUBSCRIPTION TO ACTA

A proposal had been received from ACTA for this Association to join. The results of the upcoming convention are to be reviewed. Mick Scrase is to be advised of this fact.

9.11. NEW SOUTH WALES - COALITION POLICY

States are to look at this issue and to reply to the Secretary within 30 Days.

9.12. NATIONAL COMMITTEE ITEMS

John PRINTZ

RMA submission on Spina Bifida. It was suggested that consultants be looked at for assistance.

NATIONAL POLICY HANDBOOK.

This is to be redone by John Printz and reissued.

STATEMENTS of PRINCIPLE

It was accepted by this Association that we would look at Statements of Principle after 12 months of use. It was suggested that a team be developed to keep on top of the SOP's.

The President suggested that the Association have a Senior Advocate within States and this person is to be in contact with John Printz.

This was agreed to by all delegates. To be put into operation as soon as possible.

SERVICE PENSIONS

DVA is re-engineering the service pension process, this will be similar to the current CCPS system. A watch is to be kept on this process.

DAVID WATSON addressed the meeting on Vocational Rehabilitation and the "Safety Net", Education of LMO's, Comprehensive Care Scheme, Program providers, Detoxification units, hospital accreditation. Presentations on Benefits etc. would be made in Tasmania in August.

9.13. STATE MINUTES AND CORRESPONDENCE

The President spoke on the issue of the roles of both State and National bodies, and the need for information to flow between them. He requested that copies of State minutes be sent to all other states, and that National be made an information addressee for all letters to DC's and Directors of Counselling, in order to ensure that the Executive is aware of State issues.

10.0. STATE REPORTS

State reports were presented. Those supplied in writing are attached.

11.0. NEXT CONGRESS

The next Congress is to be held in Queensland on 24th and 25th May 1997.
The President thanked Arthur Fittock and David Watson for taking the time to attend the congress for both days.

The President also thanked Western Australia for hosting the congress.

The President declared the Congress closed at 4-40 P.M.


.....
(SECRETARY)

.....
(PRESIDENT)

**VIETNAM VETERANS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA
NATIONAL COUNCIL INC**

Balance brought forward from 31 December 1994	\$ 4,097.30	\$ 4,097.30
Plus Receipts		Net Income Items
Capitations	\$ 14,860.00	\$ 14,860.00
Airmfares & Accn	\$ 10,040.00	
Govt Grant	\$ 18,000.00	\$ 18,000.00
Equipment	\$ -	
Donations	\$ 100.00	\$ 100.00
Debrief	\$ -	
Phone & Fax	\$ -	
Postage & Admin	\$ -	
Legal	\$ -	
Bank Fees & Taxes	\$ 18.04	
Interest	\$ 70.97	\$ 70.97
Other	\$ 3,561.02	
Total Receipts	\$ 46,650.03	\$ 33,030.97
Less Expenditure		Net Expenditure Items
Capitations	\$ -	
Travel & Accn	\$ 15,391.04	\$ 5,351.04
Govt Grant	\$ -	
Equipment	\$ 482.50	\$ 482.50
Donations	\$ -	
Debrief	\$ 3,167.00	\$ 3,167.00
Phone & Fax	\$ 7,253.20	\$ 7,253.20
Postage & Admin	\$ 4,071.18	\$ 4,071.18
Legal	\$ 7,444.00	\$ 7,444.00
Bank Fees & Taxes	\$ 117.92	\$ 99.88
Interest	\$ -	
Other	\$ 5,031.73	\$ 1,470.71
Total Expenditure	\$ 42,958.57	\$ 29,339.51
Balance as at 31 December 1995	\$ 7,788.76	\$ 7,788.76

VIETNAM VETERANS ASSOCIATION of AUSTRALIA
17th NATIONAL CONGRESS
NATIONAL SECRETARY's REPORT

In the past twelve months, I have represented this Association on the Mortality Study Steering Committee, the National Treatment Monitoring Committee, the Aged Care Committee, the Community Health Accreditation and Standards Program (CHASP) VAN Standards Steering Committee and MACOVI Compensation Workshops (2) with John Printz.

As far as the NATMOC Committee goes, meetings have been held in South Australia, Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria in conjunction with those State Treatment Monitoring Committees. It is a pity that a VVAA representative was not present at one of these meetings and was not an apology.

The CHASP representation resulted in the VVAA being represented on a review committee, who have conducted trial reviews in Melbourne, Adelaide and Wollongong. Though the representative, Malcolm Merrick was only involved in the Melbourne review.

The Mortality study has previously been reported on and handed to you.

In regards to communication with and from State offices, this has really been a one way street, from me to the States. This has got to such an extent that I now consider that if you do not reply then you must agree with the document sent. I also point out that the information being sent to State branches should be sent to your Sub Branches and, it appears, that this is not being done. Some comments I have received over the telephone in regards to the recent Debrief, indicate that very little is going down to members. This is one of the best ways to lose your members. I have no doubt that the National President will have more to say in his report about this matter and I can assure you that I have not shown him this report nor have I seen his.

Let us improve our communications in the coming days (not months) and, in this way, at least, you can assist the National Executive with their decisions, otherwise the Executive have no other course of action but to proceed on their own judgement and this is not the way to operate.

Lastly, I implore you to ensure that I get the data on Birth defects. This information is totally confidential, whether by phone or in writing.



(GEOFF TREVOR-HUNT)
NATIONAL SECRETARY

VIETNAM VETERANS ASSOCIATION of AUSTRALIA
17th NATIONAL CONGRESS
NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT

This has been a very busy year for me, made a bit more difficult by a few health problems. It is pleasing to see the practical outcome of years of planning by the National Executive and the National Council.

The acceptance of the cancers is exceptionally pleasing, the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Centres that are being developed right around the country and the VVAA can take a lot of credit for that so to the pounding on doors over the years.

The close working relationship between the Counselling Service and VVAA at a National level is also pleasing and this is an open relationship.

The Lifestyle courses, again, something unique to the VVAA and that 6 courses are being run in Victoria in the near future. It is pleasing to see that these courses have commenced in South Australia, Queensland starting in future. New South Wales have adopted it. It is excellent to see the close working relationship of the VVAA, the Counselling Service and the Department in running these courses. The VVAA must have input to these types of courses so that they do not drift towards Departmental needs.

The Health Study is well and truly on the way and VVAA input is important as there will only be one go. Birth Defects are currently only at the tip of the iceberg and we must not be complacent. MACOVI workshops were suggested by the VVAA and have resulted in the workshops.

The formation of a Parents and Partners Sub Branch is a case of looking at ourselves and seeing where we are failing, but now some information will be flowing down to women who did not have an input previously.

It has been personally difficult for me to see the problems with NSW and I feel that fanaticism will not prevail.

On a personal side, I have to thank Krishna, my wife, for being behind me and helping wherever and whenever possible and who has always been there for me. I am exceptionally grateful to John Printz, who has been put through a hell of a lot and has had his health affected, for his support and assistance.

To Geoff Trevor-Hunt, it was quite a shock to find the difference between Geoff and John. You have no idea of the amount of work behind the scenes that is done, and for that I thank him, and if he got a fraction of the support that he just mentioned this organisation would be purring.

A now must apply the "kick", do not lose your loyalty - from the leader down and back up and that has not always flown. You have to think about that. It is difficult when a Sub Branch rings me and has a dig at me for not passing information down. I ask States to get down to the grass roots and talk.

I would, lastly, like to put to you, that you must be progressive in your thinking and listen to the ordinary member.

This may have been a disjointed report, but it is a genuine and, as you know, I don't care if I am a pain in the backside as long as you care for your digger and that is what it all boils down to.

I thank you for your confidence over the last three years and I would like to remain on the Health Study committee and I would like to remain with MACOVI, but that is up to the new Executive and I wish Clive and his team all the best and I will certainly support him. Thank You. John Methven

BRIEFING ON VETERANS' INDEMNITY AND TRAINING ASSOCIATION INC COMMITTEE MEMBER - CLIVE MITCHELL-TAYLOR

Introduction

Structure of the Briefing The discussion within this briefing is made under the following headings:

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Background

Recent Formation

The Veterans' Indemnity and Training Organisation (VITA) is a very new organisation, formed to have carriage of indemnity for pensions advocates and ensure compliance with the TIP training requirements for Ex-Service Organisation (ESO). The committee is about 12 months old.

Appointments

The committee of VITA consists of representatives of a number of ESO:

Peter Phillips	RSL	President
John Paule	RDFWA	Secretary
Peter Burn	NAA	Treasurer
Peter Alexander	AVADSC	Member
Clive Mitchell-Taylor	VVAA	Member
Bill Maxwell	DVA	Publicity Officer

Membership

Still Small Membership is still small, with many organisations being picked up through their membership of AVADSC. Action is being taken to contact organisations which are undertaking advocacy work, and which are bona fide ESO.

VVFA In this regard, the VVFA has now been accepted as a member - a natural consequence of the fact that members undertake advocacy and are trained within the TIP structure.

Rejection of Membership Application The Committee of VITA rejected an application for membership by a group of lawyers calling themselves the Veterans' Independent Consultation Group (VICG). It was considered that the group was formed for commercial purposes and did not conform with the aims of VITA which was to provide coverage for volunteers. The application will be reconsidered when (and if) further information is provided.

List of Practitioners

List Required The accreditation protocol requires a list of practitioners to be held by VITA. It was recognised that any such list will always lag behind the reality, but that member organisations would need to provide regular updates.. The Secretary is to commence to maintain such a list manually - it remains to be seen how long this will last.

Training Information Program (TIP)

Relationship still Developing The relationship between TIP and VITA is still developing. DVA sees VITA as providing a broad perspective, leadership and a bridge between practitioners and TIP.

The Chairman indicated that there was a desire to breathe some more life into the training organisation. Apparently there is support for a plan to develop seminars for ESO leaders; as opposed to practitioners, to keep them up to date with what is happening in the program.

DVA is very supportive of the role of VITA in supporting TIP.

Other Items

Extension to Public Liability At least one Regional Director of the DVA wishes to extend the concept of VITA to public indemnity for ESO. This will apparently be pursued through DVA, despite a lack of support from the committee.

Conclusion

Administration Much of the current task of the VITA Committee is administrative, setting up systems, protocols and procedures simply to get the organisation under way. This can be tedious at times, but it is important in ensuring that VITA will continue to function in the future and grow to fulfil its role in the ESO community.

AVWVT ANNUAL REPORT TO VVAA NATIONAL CONGRESS

1. The primary purpose of the AVWT is to act as trustee of funds paid to it by the United States District Court resulting from the out-of-court settlement in the Agent Orange Product Liability Litigation.
2. The principal object of "The Trust" is assistance to eligible Vietnam veterans and their dependants in necessitous or deserving circumstances. Secondary objects include support of various types for matters generally assisting or benefiting that group.
3. The Trust operates under the Australian Distribution Plan (ADP), a document approved by the United States District Court, which provides for the Agent Orange out-of-Court Settlement funds to be distributed over a prescribed time. That Court also exercises a supervisory role over the Trust and its counterpart organisations in the United States and New Zealand.
4. Under the ADP, the Australian share of the Settlement was used to establish two payment funds, the Cash Payments Program and the Future Assistance Program. These programs are to run consecutively, with the first to close on 31 December 1996 and the second to then start. The Future Assistance Program is to operate until the termination of the Trust at the end of 2011, unless all funds are exhausted beforehand.
5. Of the \$5.5M received from the United States District Court and invested in July 1988, \$5M was set aside in late 1988 as Fund A, to finance the first program. The remaining \$500,000 was used to set up Fund B for the second program. Fund B is to receive any surplus funds remaining from Fund A. If excess monies remain at the termination of Fund B, the Memorandum and Articles of the Trust provide that such monies are to be given to an organisation or organisations of similar purpose to the Trust.

Year in Brief

6. 1995 was the sixth full year of the Trust's settlement distribution operations. During the year, a further \$.963M was distributed as assistance to eligible persons. This brought to \$5.857M the total payments made to them to the end of 1995.
7. Total assistance payments in 1995 were 6.2% lower than 1994. For the Trust's principal activity, payments to individual Vietnam veterans or their dependants in necessitous or deserving circumstances, payments were 13.7% below the 1994 level, with 865 veterans or dependants applying to the Trust in 1995, a 4.5% reduction on 1994.
8. With the cessation of the Trust's individual assistance payments under the Cash Payments Program, it is believed that a gap will exist in the support networks available to Australian Vietnam veterans or their dependents in need.
9. During the 1995 visit to Regions, opportunity was taken to brief those concerned on the year's operations and the plans of the Trust. At the same time, views were sought as to whether changes to the Trust's policies or practices were

required. No suggestions were made for changes. Indeed, all authorities visited outside the Trust expressed appreciation for the support it provided for Vietnam veterans and dependants in need. There was widespread concern however about the likely gap in the Australian Vietnam veterans support network when the Trust ceases its Cash Payments Program.

10. The essential issue was that the Trust has been distributing, on the average, about \$1M a year to the 1,000 Vietnam veterans or dependants in need who apply to it, a similar function to that performed by the Services Canteens Trust Fund for World War 2 veterans from 1948 to 1985. The matters for which assistance is given are such that they will recur after 1996 and the question raised, but not answered was, how is that gap to be filled, for the Trust's Vietnam veteran population?

11. The Board of Trustees has advised the Minister for Veterans Affairs of this situation, in the future interests of the Trust's beneficiaries. Briefings on this matter have also been given at National and State level to officers of his department, the Vietnam Veterans Counselling Service and the ex-service organisations, in order that those authorities may take account of the gap in their planning.

12. The Minister has replied acknowledging the gap, detailing a number of recent Government initiatives to improve the support available to Vietnam veterans and undertaking to have his officers examine options for dealing with the new situation. The Board expresses its appreciation to the Minister for his prompt and positive response.

13. The Trust distributed a total of \$.963M in assistance in 1995, down 6.2% on 1994. The 1995 payments brings to \$5.857M the total settlement funds distributed to date. Of the 1995 distribution, \$.692M was for individual assistance payments, the Trust's primary activity, 13.7% less than 1994. There were also further assistance payments of \$.271M under VVTEAS, up 21% from 1994. No collective assistance grants were made.

Applications Received

14. During 1995, 865 applications were received from individual veterans or dependants seeing themselves in necessitous or deserving circumstances and seeking financial assistance under the Cash Payments Program. Application numbers were 4.5% below the 1994 figure and this continued the downward trend since 1992.

15. The number of applications by Regions in 1995 follows in Table 1, with the percentage change from 1994 for comparison.

TABLE 1

APPLICATIONS BY REGIONS			
Region	Number Received		
	1994	1995	% Change
QLD	174	139	-20.1
NSW and the ACT	331	306	-7.6
VIC	189	194	+2.7
SA and NT	118	118	0.0
WA	54	63	+16.7
TAS and Overseas	40	45	+12.5
TOTAL	906	865	-4.5

VVTEAS

16. There was an increase of 21% in payments in the form of grants made to eligible student children of Vietnam Veterans under the Vietnam Veterans Trust Education Assistance Scheme (VVTEAS), an activity where the first grants were made in 1991. Applications for new VVTEAS grants increased substantially each year from 1990, the first application year, with 277 applying in 1993. There was a very slight decline in 1994 (274 applications) with 1995 seeing a further decrease to 265.

17. There were 32 new VVTEAS grants made in early 1995, the same number as 1994. These 1995 grants brought to 117 the number of veterans' children who have been assisted with the costs of their education since that scheme was established in 1990. Of those 117, some 57 were planning to continue their studies in 1996. There are 31 new grants planned for that year.

18. During 1995, assistance distributed through the VVTEAS project was \$270,888 with the 1994 figure being \$224,496. This 1995 amount represented 28% of all assistance distributed, as compared to 22% in 1994. The 1995 payments brought the total assistance distributed under VVTEAS to \$784,784 by the end of 1995.

19. The increase in VVTEAS payments in 1995 was because:

The number of new grants has been progressively increasing, from 11 in 1991 to the 32 of 1994 and 1995 in recognition of the increasing application numbers.

With most courses for which VVTEAS grants are awarded being of three or more years duration, more new recipients have been entering the scheme each year than those leaving it, having completed their VVTEAS supported education.

20. VVTEAS applications open each year on 1 September and close on 31 October. Decisions upon new grants are made early in the following year, with payments being made at the start of the new academic year (February/March). Thus grants resulting from 1995 applications will be decided in early 1996 and included in the 1996 Annual Report.

21. Table 2 which follows shows applications received and decided upon by the end of 1995 and grants made.

TABLE 2

VVTEAS APPLICATIONS AND GRANTS							
	1993/1994		1994/1995		ALL YEARS Decided Applications and Grants to end 1995		1995/1996
REGION	Apps	Grants Made	Apps	Grants Made	Apps	Grants	Apps Only
QLD	67	8	56	6	313	29	57
NSW	76	10	94	9	372	33	79
VIC	66	7	81	10	330	26	81
SA	13	2	23	3	101	12	19
WA	21	2	10	3	74	7	22
TAS	34	3	10	1	91	10	7
TOTAL	277	32	274	32	1,281	117	265

BRIEFING ON KINDRED ORGANISATIONS COMMITTEE OF THE RSL DELEGATE - CLIVE MITCHELL-TAYLOR

Introduction

Structure of the Briefing The discussion within this briefing is made under the following headings:

Topic	See Page
Background	1
Significant Items Reviewed at the April 1996 Meeting	2
Visiting Speakers	3
Motions	4
Conclusion	5

Background

Appointments At the meeting in November 1995 a new executive was elected. The chairman of the KOC is now CDRE Toz Dadswell AM of the Fleet Air Arm Association, while Derek Robinson is the Secretary.

Membership There are 30 members of the KOC, all organisations of National significance, with properly constituted representative bodies. A membership list is attached.

Effectiveness Until the most recent meeting, the KOC has not really been an effective advocate for veterans issues. There were essentially three reasons for this:

- the often trivial nature of the issues canvassed;
- factional fighting (generally between the Naval Association and the Merchant Mariners); and
- the fact that the organisation was very much under the shadow of the R & SL and many of its resolutions were simply endorsements of R & SL policy.

Significant Items Reviewed at the April 1996 Meeting

Charter The charter of the KOC, *to coordinate and promote at the National level, the interests of the entire service and ex-service communities and their dependants, including those who served in the Merchant Navy in wartime, and their dependants*, was ratified at the April meeting.

Membership The principles of membership previously described were confirmed. I have been able to introduce into discussion on this issue, the principle of 'demonstrated commitment' over a period of at least three years, and this was supported by a number of members. The VVFA is not a member of the KOC.

Financial Aspects It was resolved that those members who could assist the KOC Secretariat should make non-compulsory donations to the RSL General Account, once each year, according to their means.

The National President of the R & SL undertook that existing support to the Secretariat would be maintained.

KOC Letterhead I undertook to produce a template for KOC Letterhead paper, and have done so. The implication here is that the KOC can now be recognised as an organisation in its own right, and has no need to use R & SL letterhead for correspondence. This may be seen as a graphic demonstration of independence, and bodes well for the future.

Name of the Organisation The name of the organisation remains as the Kindred Organisations Committee of the R & SL. There has been considerable discussion on this issue, but no viable alternative was suggested. One suggestion was to drop the "of the R & SL", but it was generally agreed that the 'KOC' made no sense without it.

Frequency of Meetings It was almost unanimously agreed that the frequency of meetings be maintained at twice each year.

Continued on next page

Significant Items Reviewed at the April 1996 Meeting,

Continued

Confirmation as a Peak Body

The Chairman, CDRE Toz Dadswell, spent quite some time in discussion of the concept of the KOC as a peak body of the Ex-Service Community. He was concerned that many of the issues canvassed by the Committee in the past had been trivial.

He was also clear and unequivocal in his desire to ensure that formal motions, properly presented and supported with the necessary rational argument be used to bring significant issues to the forum.

It was resolved that the KOC establish itself as an autonomous body, reporting to whomever is necessary in order to achieve its aims.

Visiting Speakers

High Calibre

Visiting speakers are generally of a very high calibre, both in terms of their influence in the Ex-Service Community, and their oratory. They have included the previous and present Ministers of Veterans Affairs, the previous Secretary of the DVA, GEN Peter Gratton and MAJGEN Steve Gower of the AWM.

Standard of Questions

Questions are normally very parochial and relate to narrow, sectarian views. There is an opportunity here to canvas some of the wider issues, and raising the profile and status of the organisation may eventually achieve this.

Questions Relating to the VVAA

Despite the foregoing, I was delighted to have the opportunity to raise with the new Minister the issues of:

- 12-month review of the RMA; and
 - the difficulty experienced by the VVAA, the British Commonwealth Occupation Forces and the Atomic Survivors in bringing issues which are on the periphery of current medical thought successfully before the RMA, and the fact that chemical and radio-activity fall clearly within this category.
-

Motions

Examples of Motions

Following are some of the motions presented at the April meeting:

Serial	Motion	Outcome
1.	That this meeting of the KOC endorse and actively support the RSL in its efforts to gain the White Repatriation Health Card for British and Allied ex-service personnel based on the entitlement to the service pension.	Withdrawn.
2.	That this meeting of the KOC endorse the action of the RSL National Headquarters to support the granting of the Gold Card for British and Allied ex-service personnel based on the entitlement to the service pension.	Carried.
3.	That this meeting request the appropriate authority to grant those Australian mariners who volunteered and served in the Vietnam prescribed area of conflict the same conditions under the VEA as those who served in the navy under similar conditions.	Remains tables to permit adequate time for consideration of background information.
4.	That the Minister for Veterans Affairs be informed that the members of the KOC do not support the introduction of entrance fees to the Australian War Memorial under any circumstances.	Carried.

Notices of Motion

Notices of motion for the next meeting are:

Serial	Motion	Originator
1.	All ex-service personnel from WWII should be entitled to receive a Gold Card.	Commando Association
2.	Re unfair dealings in regard to Australian troops who served on Brook Island during mustard gas trials.	Atomic Ex-Servicemans Association

Entitlement to the Gold Card

The issue of the Gold Card for all ex-service personnel resurrects an issue previously canvassed by John Methven in the MACOVI, and one which may provide the opportunity to tie the receipt of the Gold Card to a specified age. Properly formulated and legislated, such a proposal will have a positive outcome for Vietnam veterans, particularly in the future, when our lack of numbers may act against us in obtaining the necessary leverage with Government. Our views should be made known to the Commando Association before the motion is framed.

Conclusion

A Rosy Future The future looks good for the KOC under the guidance of a dedicated and convincing Chairman who has the stated aim of making the KOC into a recognised peak body of the ESO. The problems which have dogged it in the past will probably continue for some time, but should gradually diminish as members realise that there is much to be gained.

More Support from the VVAA It is recommended that the VVAA use the KOC in order to progress those issues which are of National significance. This, together with our contribution to AVADSC has a multiplier effect on the influence of our organisation, one which we should use shamelessly.

1995 ANNUAL REPORT

VIETNAM VETERANS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY BRANCH INC

Welfare and Advocacy

Introduction In reviewing the achievements of the ACT Branch over the last twelve months, I believe that the most significant change has been in the area of welfare. We've built on the foundation laid by Ross Jack over many years, spread the load across a number of people, increased expertise, introduced some new services, and most importantly, publicised our activities. Letting people know what we do ensures that those who need help know where to seek it.

Welfare Most of our welfare work is undertaken by Ursula Schroedl, whose dogged perseverance and refusal to take 'No' for an answer is coupled with real compassion and innovation. The continuing success of the Family Support Group is entirely due to her work. Ursula is undertaking professional studies to enhance her ability to carry out welfare work.

Renewable Resource The ACT Branch has established a policy of continuing to assist in the area of welfare, but trying to recycle resources. This means that that once the immediate disaster is over, and the individual is back on their feet again, we recover what is effectively an interest-free loan through very low fortnightly repayments. This has been very, very successful, having the twin benefits of restoring the self-esteem of the individual, and allowing the Association to use those funds to help someone else.

Pensions and Advocacy The success of the pensions and advocacy team led by Bert Hagel and including Tony Smallbon, Kevin Byron, Ben Casey, Brian Burke and Ian Gleeson is a reflection of their commitment and expertise.

I will be seeking the support of members in the future to establish the advocacy service as a separate entity from welfare, to isolate the funding and training and establish a service which is self-funding.

The Ex-Service Community and Local Government

Contribution to Local Committees We've continued to contribute to the various committees, councils and other forums available to the ex-service service community at the local level, drawing on the expertise of a number of people to ensure that our contribution is of real value. This particular aspect of our activities demonstrates the growth and maturity of the VVAA. It gives us the opportunity to contribute to the policies which affect veterans, and that fulfils our charter in one of the most effect ways possible.

Relationship with State Government Our relationship with local Government remains strong - despite the change of Government during this period. The Chief Minister, Kate Carnell, and her Ministers, have been most supportive and have been seen to be actively supporting the organisation. We accept this as recognition of the merit of the activities we undertake.

The Committee

Executive The executive team which was elected in August 1995 year has been instrumental in maintaining the direction and activities of the ACT Branch through what has been very difficult period for the State organisation. Just as an example, without the work undertaken by Bob Shearing, Stuart Weller, and Margaret Wine, we would have been unable to put on the National Congress for the second consecutive year. Laurie Wiseman has continued to contribute heavily, despite a serious illness during a major part of this time, and Peter Wilton remained as Treasurer, dealing with our continuing financial crises in his usual calm and collected fashion

Fundraising

Welfare Concert Another attempt was made at major fund-raising through a concert. In one way this was a highly successful activity, and the concert was magnificent. Pragmatically, it was a disaster, as the timing and possibly the cost of entry meant that attendance was abysmal. While the Association didn't make any money out of the activity, it didn't lose any either, and the idea has been put on hold for the moment. We will have to go back to more traditional methods of fundraising.

Membership and Politics

Failed Takeover

There is an old platitude that says "that which doesn't kill me makes me stronger". The last year has been a little like that. A number of people joined the Branch in 1994 in order to take it over, and created an enormous amount of friction and ill-feeling in the attempt. The attempt was unsuccessful as it happens, but many of those members now remain and contribute strongly to the Branch, recognising that we're all here for the same reasons - to help veterans.

Membership

Membership doubled during 1994, and despite the loss of about 15 to 20 individuals directly associated with the formation of the Federation in the ACT, membership remained at the same level during 1995. It is expected to rise again in the new membership year.

Maintaining Focus

Despite the dramas of the last year, I have to thank those involved for ensuring that my focus always remained on helping veterans. This has not always been easy, and the situation has not been assisted by the fact that a \$50,000 writ for defamation was issued in respect of the magazine SIN LOI and its editor. This had to be defended, and the Association was enjoined as a third party.

The issue dragged on for a little under two years, and was finally settled out of court immediately prior to the case being heard. No damages or costs were paid. Simply put, an explanation to be printed in SIN LOI confirms that there was no intent to defame or malign the individual concerned. In return, he is required to sign an undertaking not to take any action in regard to the alleged defamation, or the Phill Thompson Centre.

It was an unsatisfactory outcome from our point of view, but the settlement was made on the advice of counsel. Should the case have gone to court it would only have cost more than the current costs of about \$10,000, there is always a chance that you will not win, and of course the individual concerned has no assets and recovering costs would be virtually impossible.

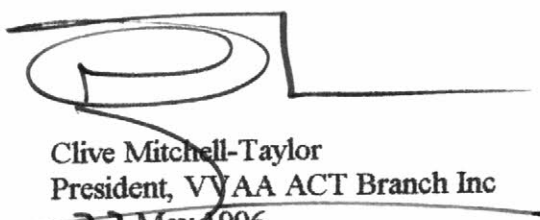
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Incomplete

**Work Not
Completed**

Among the work that we were unable to complete has been a review of the State Constitution. Perhaps this may have occurred had there been fewer distractions at the beginning of our year, then again, perhaps not, as it has been on the agenda for at least the last three years.

We haven't yet plugged into the opportunities provided by the Joint Ventures Scheme, but we hope to prepare a proposal for administrative support for the Branch, the Family Support Group, and our Advocacy Service.



Clive Mitchell-Taylor
President, VVAA ACT Branch Inc

22 May 1996



Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia Queensland Branch Inc.

"Honour the Dead but Fight like Hell for the Living"

P O Box 340 Kallangur QLD 4503

Phone Fax (07) 3886 3799

NATIONAL CONGRESS REPORT

During the last 12 months the Queensland State executive has got back to basics and concentrating on recruitment and welfare.

WELFARE

Our welfare program is now heading in the right direction with a big increase in Pension Officers Advocates etc. but obviously with the increase in Pension Officers etc there is also a big increase in the number of claims that we are handling. I am very happy to report that the majority of claims submitted are being accepted first time. One of our Pension Officers (Noel Huish) has been practising for about 12 months and would have done approximately 60 claims of which 50 have been accepted first time. He has had five reviewed under the section 31 review with another five to the VRB. He is still waiting the results of 1 Sec 31 review and 3 VRB. This example reflects the results of the majority of people I have spoken to. All pension Officers/Advocates that I have spoken to including members of other ESO agree that the Section 31 reviews are excellent value and definitely needs to be retained (I agree with this 100%).

From discussions with other Pension Officers it is quite apparent that the vast number of claims are for:

- A. PTSD,
- B. Alcohol abuse,
- C. Hearing and tinnitus,
- D. Back, Neck and Knee problems, and
- E. Heart disease (majority attributed smoking and alcohol).

The number of Pension Officers/Advocates that we know of and have accepted for accreditation is approx 20 and we have some that are awaiting courses.

The TIP program is working extremely well with all courses being well supported. Noel Huish our State Treasurer is our nominated representative on this committee and is now working with the TIP committee as a course co-ordinator and also Instructor on courses. I myself also attend the TIP meetings.

SUB BRANCH ACTIVITIES.

One of my aims for Qld this year is recruitment and we are getting very active in this arena. I believe that as at this moment Brisbane North has in the vicinity of 150 - 155 members and still growing. At this time I would also like to make special mention of our Logan and Albert Sub Branch which now seems to be back on track and have got a very active committee and are now getting involved once again.

During the last twelve months we have gained three (3) new Sub Branches however unfortunately lost one. Of these the most significant would be the Redcliffe Peninsula Sub Branch which would have approx 45 - 50 members in a space of only about 6 weeks. Latest news from Toowoomba as at 23 May 1996 another new Sub Branch at Stanthorpe commencing with about 40 members. I believe that their first meeting will be 16 June.

The most notable achievement by a Sub Branch in Qld would have to be by Brisbane North with the construction and dedication of Vietnam Veterans Place. This project was a Joint Venture Between the Pine Rivers Council, Brisbane North and also the Pine Rivers RSL and Services club. All up cost of the project would have been approx \$30 000 of which the Council donated the land and about \$23 500 with the Pine Rivers RSL and Services club donating the rest. It did not cost anything apart from time given by members of the sub branch to assist with the stamping of Pavers and the construction of the site. The other notable achievement was Zac's Place in Townsville a Project of the Townsville Sub Branch. Other projects that are on the drawing board at the moment are:

- A. Brisbane North - Black Duck Creek project,
- B. Bribie Island and District - Vietnam Veterans Park,
- C. Redcliffe Peninsula - Vietnam Veterans Memorial Gardens, and
- D. Sunshine Coast - Mudjimba project

The Black Duck Creek project once again was suggested by the Pine Rivers Council. What it is at the moment is that we can lease a 2.5 acre property from the council at a very small fee and also they will donate a house (old Qlder) which we will have to pay to have moved and set up. At the moment the Kedron - Wavell RSL and Services Club have indicated that they will give us a grant towards this project. It will not be a Halfway House but will be used by our members and especially by our Pension Officers as at the moment we are all working out of our homes. Will keep you informed of our progress.

Vietnam Veterans Park will be opposite the Bribie Island RSL and Citizens club and is being controlled by the Bribie Sub Branch and the Caboolture Council. Hopefully the first stage will be finished and dedicated on Vietnam Veterans Day this year.

Vietnam Veterans Memorial Gardens is very much in the planning stage only. However the Redcliffe Peninsula Sub Branch has approached the Mayor of Redcliffe and he had given a verbal OK to the project and has instructed the Sub Branch to put in a written request which will be looked at favourably.

In relation to the Sunshine Coast project the Maroochydoore

Council have donated a 12 acre property to the Sub Branch for its use. This park is going to be set up with a lake and Community Hall for the use of veterans. The Sunshine Coast branch is also looking at the options of having community organisations such as Boy Scouts, Girl Guides etc use it.

FUNDRAISING

The only Fundraising as such that was carried out by State was a golf day on Vietnam Veterans day last year in aid of Zac's Place in Townsville. This activity raised in the vicinity of \$700.00.

Fundraising activities for the remainder of this year and next year that we are looking at for State is Badge Week (discuss later) and a Vietnam Veterans Ball or Dinner of types. This last one is being studied at the moment.

Although most probably not strictly a Fund raiser, the Townsville National Reunion next year.

Sub Branches are carrying out their own fundraising activities.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

The State Branch for the first time that we know of conducted a Christmas meeting and party last year at Caloundra with about 90 odd people in attendance. We will be holding another one this year.

Don Palmer, the President of the Southport Branch, was made a State Life Member at our annual congress in March this year. Congratulations and well done.

As can be seen from this report there is a lot going on. However we are still having some problems with Sub Branches, not particularly new, but we are endeavouring to sort them out.

FINANCIAL REPORT.

See Attached

*Damage Lique in Aid of Black Duck Creek project
at Stafford Flea Market. Brisbane North*

Takeings \$780 Gross

Cost \$140

Profit \$640

Plus 6 new members

Time frame 5AM TO 9AM

will be run again next Sunday.



Vietnam Veterans Association of South Australia Inc.

c/- Walkerville RSL
98 Walkerville Terrace
P.O. Box 71
Walkerville S.A. 5081

Tel. (08) 269 7679

Sub Branches
Broken Hill:
Eyre Peninsula:
Mt. Gambier:
Riverland:

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN STATE PRESIDENTS' REPORT

NATIONAL CONGRESS - MAY 1996

Firstly my apologies for not being with you all at the National Congress. It is unfortunate that I had made an arrangement in 1995, prior to my election as State President, to travel to Darwin during May with a large group of Vietnam Veterans raising money for kids with cancer. Bert Newell, our State Vice President is attending in my place and will submit my report on my behalf.

Since the last National Congress we have been active in promoting the VWAA SA in various areas including discussions/meetings with the Deputy Commissioner and other senior members of the DVA, The Grunt Club (which is an organisation peculiar to South Australia), the WVCS, ALSFA and have attended every monthly meeting of the S.A. Younger Veterans Forum.

Alot of ground work went into 1995/96 which will become evident during 1996/97

The Younger Veterans Forum, which we attend regularly and in force, at times has difficulty addressing the issues that the Forum members themselves have raised. On these occasions the VWAA SA have acted as an "umbrella group" by promoting a positive direction for Forum working parties to address (recently a senior member of the DVA described the VWAA SA as the premier Vietnam Veteran organisation in South Australia) These working party areas have included;

1. Pension officer training
2. Advocate training
3. The ex Military Resource Centre
4. The Daw Park Repatriation General Hospital PTSD Program

Younger Veteran Forum Working Parties on which the VWAA SA is well represented are having positive results in these four major areas. Briefly they are;

46 pensions officers at various stages of training with about 20% of these trainees demonstrating Advocate potential
The ex Military Resource Centre of which the VWAA SA are the financial managers is now very close to being under way after some frustrating external delays.
The RGH PTSD Program has its third intake of Veteran clients currently attending the program. The YV Forum working party is involved in a consultative and program assessment situation with the PTSD program team.

We have also attended six TIP Consultative Committee meetings since the formation of this committee in August 1995.

Our relationship with kindred Veteran organisations continues to be enhanced and although at times we may not be able to agree on everything at the end of the day we are all capable of agreeing to disagree on an issue and not let that issue sour the strength of working together for the benefit of our veteran community.

Recently, in consultation with Vietnam Veterans in the Port Pirie district, which is approximately 200kms north of Adelaide, the WVAA SA made its first move into Community radio. These programs, called "Vietnam Remembered", have recently finished. It was an excellent 7 weeks. We consider that we learnt a lot for our future involvement in community radio. We believe that the main things we learnt were firstly that we should have a continuous program of involvement in community radio throughout South Australia and that in future we should take a more prominent role in the program planning, content and the selection of Veterans for interviews.

Whilst he was passing through Adelaide we managed to get the National President of WVAA fifteen minutes on ABC regional radio (the ABC originally said five minutes!) He spoke well and covered a lot of issues. It was more good exposure.

In the past year changes in South Australia within the DVA and WVCS have at times been interesting and occasionally frustrating. Mario Cattapan the relatively new Deputy Commissioner, advised us last year that change was a cultural thing. Within the DVA we have recognised some very good people who have changed but we do wish that one or three people in the Department would get their cultural act together.

We have many innovative projects about to come into fruition and to accommodate some of these we have recently extended our office hours and are now open for business 5 days a week. Our membership continues to increase as does our bank balance. Operating costs are always a concern, however with innovative fund raising ideas and a watchful eye on costs we are in the enviable position of having a healthy bank account. The anticipated reduction in the future effectiveness of some of our splinter groups in SA means we expect an increased demand for our services and the resultant rises in operating costs. We are planning ahead for this contingency.

Greater demands are being placed on our committee and volunteers. Realising this we have been promoting, with success, the sourcing of specific expertise to assist future committees in obtaining the positive results which we believe will be required of them in such areas as research, fundraising and communicating with Vietnam Veterans and their families. These areas will always be central to the WELFARE of our veterans in the future.

Alan Krikke
South Australian State President

VIETNAM VETERANS' ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA INCORPORATED NEW SOUTH WALES

PRESIDENTS REPORT

On Saturday February 17, 1996 the inaugural meeting of the VVAA Inc NSW was held at the City of Campbelltown RSL Club.

The reason for the meeting was to update members on the current state of the Association in NSW and to elect a new State Committee.

Mr Clive Mitchell-Taylor (National Treasurer VVAA National Council) presided over the meeting and was assisted by Mr Jim Talbot (National Public Officer VVAA National Council).

The following members were duly elected

President	Mr Gordon (Dutchy) Holland JP
Snr Vice President	Mr Peter Carey
Jnr Vice President	Mr Glen Summerhayes
Secretary	Mr John O'Brien
Assistant Secretary	Mr Bernard (Bernie) Egan
Treasurer	Mr David Crampton
Welfare Officer	Mr Michael (Mick) Scrase
Committee Members	Mr John Rowan
	Mr Jim Spruce <i>SPRICE</i>
	Mr David Ledgard
	Mr Bob Meehan
	Mr Colin Beveridge
	Mr Jack Laurie

Unfortunately Mr O'Brien was forced to resign due to his current workload. However, the void has currently been filled by Mr Robert (Bob) Layt, who has volunteered to accept the role of Honorary Secretary and has been performing a sterling task.

Due to our recent formation and the ongoing turmoil of the former NSW Branch, we have not had the opportunity to perform to our fullest capacity. Although, having said that I feel that with our current committee's enthusiasm and dedication we are well on the way, with our next meeting to be held on June 15, 1996 at the Garrison Chapel in Sydney.

It must also be realised that there is a current shortage of funds and we have not been, successful in obtaining a home. However we have been graciously allowed the availability of the City of Campbelltown RSL Board Room to conduct our committee meetings. The problem of a home should only be for a short period as we currently have a number of options opening up for us. Once we have a home to work from I believe our charter of bringing the NSW Association together and looking after the welfare of our veterans will flourish.

I would like to apologise to yourself and the other members of the council for not being able to attend the National Council, however, I am sure that Mr Jim Talbot will represent us and relay our concerns and best wishes to the Council adequately.

Finally, I and my committee would like to extend our best wishes to you and the Council and look forward to hearing from you on your return.

Kindest regards



Dutchy Holland

VIETNAM VETERANS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA (NT BRANCH)

ANNUAL REPORT TO NATIONAL CONGRESS, PERTH 1996

The last twelve months have again been reasonably quiet but with a busy period happening over the next week with the arrival of the Vet Connect tour and other functions to support it. There will be a concert at the Showgrounds on Wednesday 28 May and a plaque dedication at the Darwin Cenotaph on the Thursday to commemorate the Vet Connect ride. We are slightly up on numbers from 1995 with 78 members currently on the register. Attendances at meetings have been a concern and this year the Executive changed the meeting venue to the FAC facility in the Northern Suburbs and numbers appear to be on the rise which is a heartening sign.

Fund-raising is a priority as our accounts are depleted due to running costs and expenses for the bus. The Joint Ventures Claim for funding was unsuccessful. The bus is necessary and certainly gets its use with donations being made by other user groups to cover fuel. Currently approaches have been made to Darwin Mitsubishi to carry out a changeover of both our vehicles for a new bus.

The Defence Forces held the Charity Golf Day again which was successful and raised \$2,000.00. This year it was again won by the Police team. Unfortunately Defence Credit were unable to sponsor the event and after a lot of frantic ringing around we were able to find a new sponsor, Smart Cover, who have agreed to sponsor us for the next four years.

We are about to launch another major raffle with another tool box from Repco being the main prize. Last years raffle was reasonably successful with most of the tickets being sold and approximately \$3000 raised.

Coral House is still running well under the capable management of Jill Barnes. The house has had a clean up and a repaint and some replacement white goods and furniture. There are currently six persons in the house and the garden has undergone a major overhaul from the occupants and now looks quite smart and presentable.

The Centralian Sub-Branch is non existent at the moment with those members who live in Alice Springs joining direct. Unfortunatley there seems to be a negative undercurrent within veterans in the area and the various clubs representing them. Lack of interest is also a major factor. Hopefully this can be rectified in the near future.

Our AGM is to be held in June. Results in relation to office bearers will be advised as soon as possible. I will be standing down as President as my term of office will be completed. Hopefully, John Shepherd will step up and take the reins and keep the ship running. However, even though I will be taking a back seat, I will still keep a keen interest in the Association and its activities. I have been on the NT Executive since 1988 when the Association was reformed and have held the positions of Treasurer, Vice-President and President during those years. As you all well know this work is demanding and time consuming and I admire all of you for your dedication and commitment. I look forward to seeing you all in Darwin when we host the Congress.

G.R. CASEY
PRESIDENT

J. SHEPHERD
VICE-PRESIDENT

VIETNAM VETERANS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

Tasmania Incorporated

Report to National Congress Perth WA on 24/26 May 1996
By State President Brian Mc Kenzie

We certainly have had a big year with a number of new initiatives being put in place to the benefit of our community. We as a state body are in a position to take direct action to assist those of our mates and families who are in need. We now have established a very effective network within our organization and within the State DVA.

Regular meetings are conducted with claim assessors with a large proportion pension cases being successful after review under section 31. Sound relationships continue to develop at all levels between the VVAA and the DVA Tasmania. The VVAA - Tasmania now has one or more representatives on every DVA/ESO committee in the state. A stark contrast to our position two years ago.

Regular meetings under the Younger Veterans Consultative Group have opened a number of doors that has enabled us to express our opinion and needs. A large number of Veterans and families have benefited recently from initiatives taken as a result of problems that were identified in this forum. Our next project is to conduct a joint DVA/VVAA Younger Veterans Needs Analysis throughout Tasmania.

We were honoured early in the year with a visit from our National President, John Methven to Launceston to be briefed on the Family reunion. John was able to meet with Reunion Committees, staff at WVCS (Hobart and Launceston), DC and the Lord Mayor of Hobart. I took the opportunity to brief John regarding the operation, concerns and achievements of the branch. Thank you John for taking the time.

On 26 January 1996, I and a number of Veterans and families attended the site of the Proposed new Aquatic Centre in Hobart. The occasion was the announcement by the Premier and the Lord Mayor that the new swimming pool was to be named The "Vietnam Veteran Memorial" Olympic Pool. This gesture indicates that we as a veteran community have considerable support, recognition and acceptance from the State and Local Government. The things that we all are quietly working towards and up to National level. Arthur Fittock, Commissioner for Repatriation was so impressed he sent a letter of congratulations. We should feel proud that those who are no longer with us, and those of us who are, have been honoured in this way.

A Basic Pension Officers course was conducted in Hobart on 27/28 April 1996 with assistance from presenters from Victoria. Twenty- one people completed the course with the biggest proportion being Vietnam Veterans. A big thank you to John Printz, Brian Milner and Peter Liefman for a job well done. Plans are underway to conduct further courses on the north and north-west. It is a simple

fact that ex-service organisations in Tasmania are in need of competent well trained pension officers. I recently had discussions with a pension officer regarding a possible advanced course that he might like to attend. The answer, "They would be only teaching me to suck eggs." The person concerned regularly attends the VRB with outdated material and has a very low success rate.

Our plan is to establish a regular meeting forum for Welfare/Pension Officers to exchange information, foster communication and extend our Networking throughout the state.

Our Veteran Support groups are expanding rapidly with the Launceston based group moving into new premises at the WVCS. The Hobart group has grown to the stage that a submission is being compiled to relocate to larger premises. The plan is to obtain and promote the "multi user facility" concept. A combined VVAANVCS submission has been presented to DVA for consideration. A Computer, Laser Printer and two Facsimile machines has been purchased via Joint Ventures under the community Advocacy Program. These items will assist our welfare work and foster networking.

Thank you to those who have contacted me regarding the mystery illness. From the letters that I have received from all over Australia I can say that there are a lot people in our community who suffer from epilepsy. I received a phone call some time back from a veteran who has 2 daughters (aged 4 & 2) who have recently been diagnosed with this illness. I now find myself requesting that if any veterans has children have been diagnosed with condition to contact me with the details. All details will be treated in confidence.

Many of our members have been directly involved in the dreadful episode at Port Arthur in particular in the emergency services area. Resources at the WVCS in Hobart were stretched to the limit with some counsellors committed to the Tasman Peninsular for two weeks. The whole of population seems to be in a state of shock and will need time to recover.

Most of us in the state have been "burning the midnight oil" working on various aspects of the family reunion. Things are finally coming together. A lot of accommodation has been booked and the welcome mats will be out shortly. The federal Government has not as yet given us any funds. This is particularly disappointing when you consider they have allocated \$ 250,000 to send a few ex-diggers and Public servants to Vietnam in August 1996. This is just one of the many challenges that we have had to meet in organising the event.

Cheers,



Brian Mc Kenzie
State President

AVADSC REPORT TO THE 1996 CONGRESS

Australian Veterans and Defence Services Council (AVADSC)

As your representative to AVADSC, I have been attending the monthly meetings held in Sydney. I have attended nearly all the meetings, missing some because of the Vietnam Veterans' Mortality Study Steering Committee, which I attend as the AVADSC representative. As this issue is being covered by the National Secretary, I will not comment on it in this report. However, it is suffice to say that although progress has been slow, the nominal roll is soon to be released and the first findings of the study will follow soon after.

Issues covered by AVADSC during the year have been varied and wide spread, as the council represents some 30 ex-service organisations. In keeping with our Charter and the authority given to me by the National Council, I only get involved in issues affecting our membership. These issues include:

- a. the backlog of claims within DVA and the VRB and how to clear them,
- b. the Repatriation Medical Authority and SOPs.
- c. the Repatriation Commission.
- d. MACOVI.
- e. The Compensation Claims Processing System.
- f. Aged care.
- g. The new Military Compensation Scheme.
- h. VAN. and
- I. the new Coalition Policies towards veterans.

Minutes of the meetings and any pertinent documents are provided to the National Council and whenever there are any issues I believe need the immediate attention of the National Executive, I contact the or provide our President with a report.



Jim Talbert
Public Officer

23 May 1996

VICTORIAN

STATE REPORT

The Victorian Branch now consists of twenty-five sub-branches, the last to join is called the Partners and Family sub-branch. The need has arisen to form a branch such as this, to ensure all members of the association gain information, vital to the care of the veteran community.

Another sub-branch formed this year was the Museum sub-branch, their committee has put together a museum trailer second to none. The trailer has visited many sub-branches and functions throughout the state, and is at present travelling with the Vet's connect Bike ride around Australia.

An Education Kit on Australia's involvement in Vietnam is to be produced by the sub-branch, and used as a guide when presenting it to pupils at secondary college.

The D.V.A. are financially supporting the promotion of the trailer in the ride.

Victoria has run three Living with Pressure seminars so far this year, two in Melbourne and one in Geelong, with another one to be held in Sale at a date to be fixed. These workshops develop practical skills, and are supported in managing the pressures of daily living, the seminars introduce simple techniques in areas such as relaxation, and problem solving.

The state have run welfare and pension courses throughout the year, with others planned for the latter half of this year. A welfare meeting is held for all sub-branches before the quarterly council meeting, this enables all sub-branches to attend without additional costs in travel, again showing we are concerned with costs, in running the association.

The Life style management courses still continue to be successful, and are great demand. The June course is fully booked out, and applications are being accepted for the August and November courses.

A Back to Basics weekend will be held in Anglesea [Vic] this year on the first weekend in October. similar weekends have been very successful, and hence the drive again this year. The weekend gives the veteran and their partners a chance to relax, and enjoy group discussions, all workshops are voluntary.

The weekend will again be conducted by the V.V.A.A. with speakers from the V.V.C.S. and financially supported by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Back to Basics is part of Health Week.

Best Regards

Alan Hughes
President Victorian Branch.