

DFWA NSW BRANCH

NATTER

A NEWS SHEET PRODUCED FOR THE INTEREST OF NSW MEMBERS JULY 2014

A BRIEF HELLO FROM MICHAEL STUART-WATT NSW BRANCH PRESIDENT

Greetings to you all, at a time of significant change in the NSW Branch office. Much of your committee's attention, post Budget, has been focussed on moving from our 'historical' tower in the Army Band Building in Victoria Barracks, to Building 96, which backs onto Oxford Street, Paddington.

Our relocation into a more conducive and accessible office will enable us to both increase our profile and improve our visibility to the serving members of Forces Command and Training Command.

Of course the NSW Branch's good work has been due to the earlier efforts made by John Haynes in setting up the 'original' office which we have occupied for over 20 years. We are extremely grateful for such a contribution, along with those of past committee members and Presidents.

Our main role remains as Advocates and we are engaged heavily with DVA (NSW) in ensuring services provided to the Defence community are maintained and enhanced wherever possible. Recent surveys and committee meetings attest to DVA's desire to improve service delivery.

Hopefully, DFRB/DFRBD members should have all received an increase in their pensions in this new Financial Year.

A reminder to everyone that you are most welcome to attend our Annual General Meeting on 2 September 2014. (A flyer is included with details in this Camaraderie).

While on the subject of, membership and contributions to the work we do, you might care to consider helping in some capacity. As we begin to review and 'clean up' our database records, why not consider encouraging any of your military friends to join DFWA. Join now and they will receive complimentary membership until December 2014.

Looking forward to seeing you at the AGM
Regards, **Michael**

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

Budget delivered election commitments to veterans and their families

Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold and White treatment card holders are not impacted by the co-payment measures. Under DVA arrangements the DVA fee will continue as the full payment to provider with no charge to the card holder who will not pay the proposed \$7 fee.

CHANGES TO DVA CARDS FOR 2014 REISSUE

The DVA Health Cards identify you as being eligible for DVA funded health care services through registered health care providers. New cards will be distributed to all current card holders during the month of June 2014. Please contact DVA if you have not received your new card by mid July 2014. DVA providers will continue to accept old cards until the expiry date shown on the card.

The changes to the new cards are:

- ◆ The title on all of the cards is now, 'DVA Health Card'.
- ◆ The front of the card has the 100 years centenary of the ANZAC logo on the background of a field of poppies.
- ◆ The DVA security hologram has moved to the front of the card providing greater visibility of this security feature.
- ◆ The signature stripe on the back of the card is longer, allowing more room for a signature.
- ◆ The magnetic stripe for a Gold Card is now gold, on the White Card this is now blue, while the Orange Card retains a black stripe.
- ◆ The Cards are valid for six years now, instead of the previous four years.

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT GOES MOBILE AND SOCIAL

With evidence emerging that younger veterans are accessing mental health information online via mobile devices, the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Senator the Hon Michael Ronaldson launched a new mobile version of the highly-regarded 'At Ease' mental health online portal.

A mobile version of the DVA portal has been developed to give users easier access to mental health information and support on their smart phones

The 'At Ease' website helps veterans and their families to recognise the signs of poor mental health, access self-help advice and tools, learn when and where to find professional support and learn from the stories of other veterans.

DVA is adapting its programs to better meet the needs of contemporary veterans. The aim is to help them manage mental health concerns and encourage them to seek help and treatment early to support recovery.

For free and confidential Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VVCS) phone: 1800 011 046

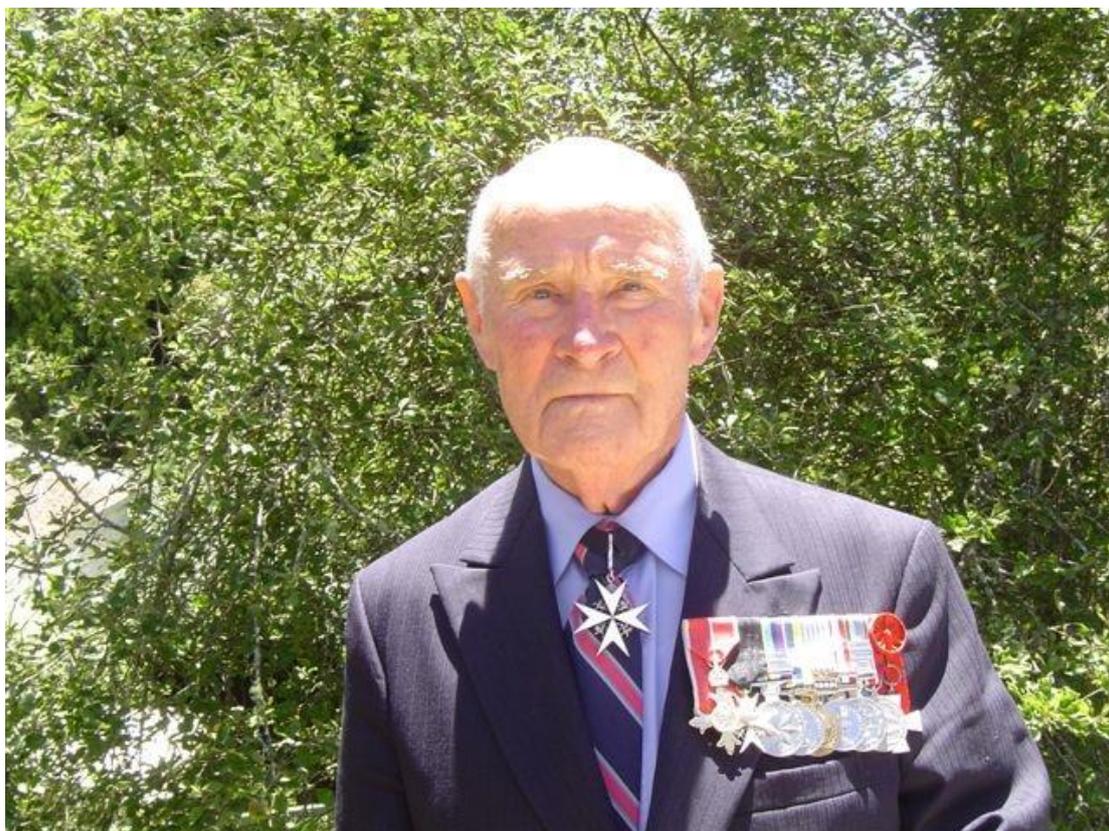
To visit the 'At Ease' portal, go to:

www.at-ease.dva.gov.au.

DFWA's mission is to promote and protect the interests of serving, former Members and Reserves of the Defence Forces and their families and work closely with other Ex-Service Organisations (ESOs).

A LIFE OF SELFLESS SERVICE

*Commander Warren J Brash OBE RAN (Rtd)
retires as DFWA NSW Branch Membership Secretary*



Warren has handed over the baton of Branch membership to Robert Enos, after ten years of dedicated service to the DFWA cause. But this has been but a small part of a lifetime of service to many causes not just that of the needs of the serving and ex-service communities.

Born on 22 March 1929 he joined the navy in 1945 and served until 1969. In 1965 he was appointed as the Military Secretary to the Governor General, Lord Casey, KG GCMG CH DSO MC PC, at Yarralumla, in Canberra. He was also subsequently appointed as an Officer in the Military Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE)

In 1969 he was appointed a Commander of the Order of St John (CStJ) and the following year, now a civilian, he was made a Board member of the then St John Ambulance Association.

In the years that followed he continued to serve many causes including the role of Honorary Vice-Consul of Finland, involvement with the Sir William Dobell Art Foundation and fund raising events for the Greystanes Children's Home, a caring refuge for intellectually and physically handicapped children and young adults. His role as Membership Secretary of the DFWA NSW Branch has been but one in a significant "Lifetime of Selfless Service".

An appreciation by Ralph Derbidge

THE INTRICATE ISSUES OF A CLIENT CASE

John King, NSW Branch Pension Officer, tells us that a few years ago a lady visited the office in Victoria Barracks Sydney, for help to solve a problem in obtaining her DFRDB reversionary benefits having been ruled ineligible by Comsuper after submitting a claim with the aid of another ESO. DVA suggested DFWA could help.

Her husband had been in the RAAF in WWII and after he died she was granted a War Widow pension through DVA without any fuss.

However, before his death her husband started physically abusing her, particularly after drinking. After one episode she called the police and was advised to take out an AVO against him and to take up a separate residence. She took the necessary action and ultimately went to court over the matter. They both signed a court order to not attend each other's residences.

The lady could not produce any papers to support the agreement and could only guess the date. An application was made to the police under the Freedom of Information procedures to confirm the information with negative response.

The court was approached for information and again drew a blank.

In trying to sort it out we asked a previously hired solicitor whether there was some other way to get the Clerk of the Court to look for the records which he was able to do and found that the lady was a year out in her dates and a copy of the court order document was obtained.

Meanwhile, the lady kept in touch with her husband and ensured that he was visited by cleaners, medical staff and meals-on-wheels and looked after his financial issues and banking. Ultimately, after a number of hospitalisations she organised for him a unit in an hostel and later an Aged Care facility.

As the lady had no other documents we then needed to get a copy of her husband's DVA record to clarify his situation when in hospital and whether she was listed as Next-of-Kin or Carer, as Concord Hospital could not provide any help.

It turned out that he had a large history of psychiatric treatment in both Victoria and NSW repatriation hospitals and that could be sufficient to satisfy ComSuper that she remained as his wife and that the separate residences were according to a court order.

The next problem was whether she actually operated his bank account and whether she visited him regularly when he went into the Aged Care Facility.

The bank had closed the account and did not respond to a written request to confirm her access rights. The staff of the Aged Care facility was very happy to provide information that supported her contentions.

John King was then able to provide ComSuper with copies of all the required documents to verify that the lady had remained married and continued to care for her husband and proof of her identity and a Statutory Declaration by herself.

It had taken 12 months to gather every thing together and ComSuper then accepted her claim and paid from her original lodgement date. Despite correspondence from this office on her behalf ComSuper did not copy the determination to this office until they were approached by telephone to inquire as to progress.

Nor did the lady call to thank the DFWA for its free counselling and to top it off, she declined to take out a membership of the Association.

However, the moral of this case is mainly, that people should keep some records and not rely on memory which can often be faulty.

**If you need FREE DFWA counselling
contact John King or Barry Wright
(02) 8335 5447**

ESOs PROVIDE FREE OF CHARGE ADVOCACY AND CLAIMS ASSISTANCE TO VETERANS IN NEED

Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) recently investigated a complaint about an advocate advertising his services for a fee of \$500 on a Facebook forum. A Facebook message was sent to this individual to politely outline that the Department does not condone the charging of veterans for advocacy services.

At the same time, social media posts and articles will be published to promote that advocacy services are for free and to encourage former and current defence force members to seek advocacy support from their local Ex-Service Organisations.

Keypoints of the campaign are:

- ◆ ESOs provide free of charge advocacy and claims assistance to veterans in need.
- ◆ If a veteran is approached by an advocate who will charge a fee to work on their case, he should be denied. The veteran should seek out an ESO who will provide these services free of charge.

DFWA NSW Branch can help

- ◆ Your Association, as an Ex-Service Organisation, has a range of free advocacy programs to assist the veteran community. Including:
 - ◆ Claims assistance to veterans in need.
 - ◆ Advocacy advice to members, widows and widowers.

ENTITLEMENT FOR WIDOWS

Your NSW Branch has been busily putting together an 18 page document informing widows of a wide range of entitlements covering the following matters and many more of interest to all widows:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ A Help Line for Defence families ◆ Pensions and supplements ◆ Lump sum advances ◆ Country taxi voucher scheme for War Widow pensioners ◆ Taxi transport subsidy scheme ◆ Identity cards and concessions ◆ Housing, home maintenance and accommodation support ◆ Age care assessment teams | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Carer allowance ◆ Community nursing and convalescent care ◆ What if you want to work past age pension age? ◆ Meals on wheels ◆ The Home Power Savings Program ◆ Commonwealth Seniors Health Card ◆ After hours GP Helpline |
|--|--|

**If you would like a FREE copy of 'Entitlement for Widows' write to:
DFWA NSW Branch. Victoria Barracks, Oxford Street, Paddington 2020**

NSW BRANCH DONATIONS SINCE MARCH 2014

Thank you very much for the donations we have received recently, your generosity is keeping the Association going. Just a gentle reminder to renew your subscription if you have not done so, as numbers count when it comes to lobbying politicians.

Mrs L Adams, Harrington; Mrs P Bridges, Darling Point; SQNLDR J M J Campbell, Turrumurra; Mrs K E Connor-Brown, Terrigal; Mrs F M Demmler, Banora Point; Mr K Frost, Tinonee; CDRE K A Gulliver, Killcare; Captain G Heys, Armidale; CAPT M T Kaminski, Mittagong; WO R I Lawrance, Orange; Mr K Marsh, Normanhurst; Mr R I McInnes, Drummoyne; Merewether-Hamilton

RSL Sub-Branch; LCDR G H Miller, East Ballina; GPCAPT S C Mitchell, Mount Riverview; Major J M Neenan, Coogee; Mrs P M Page, Saratoga; Mr D J Powers, North Richmond; Mrs L Remfry, Camperdown; Mr K N Ryan, Mudgeeraba; GPCAPT L J Tindal, Winston Hills; Captain H E Tooth, Wyong; Dr B O Wright, Ashfield; LTCOL C P Yacopetti, Tura Beach.

A STRONG MEMBERSHIP GIVES US A LOUD VOICE

You can help swell the DFWA ranks by inviting any of your ex-service and serving colleagues and friends, who are not members of the Association to join up. Show them this copy of Camaraderie with an application for membership inside and let them know some of the aims of the DFWA and the advantages of joining us, ie:

- ◆ **DFWA's purpose** is to foster the best interests and welfare of all members of the Australian Defence Force and their families in any matter likely to affect them during or after their service period
- ◆ **DFWA provides** advocacy services on behalf of serving and retired personnel who may have a claim under Commonwealth Acts covering superannuation, compensation and veterans' affairs.
- ◆ **Current issues being addressed:**
 - ◆ Restoration of DVA Disability Pension indexation to parity.
 - ◆ Extending fair indexation to MSBS members during or after their period of service.
 - ◆ Increasing support to veterans' health care, particularly mental health.
 - ◆ Improving the service to civil transition processes. These issues and many others

ELECTRONIC FUNDS TRANSFER (EFT) IS EASY

If you wish to pay membership fees or make a donation just quote your surname, initials and the nature of your deposit. Please note: Use the word 'Defence' NOT DFWA in the descriptor to:

***Defence Bank. A/name: Defence Force Welfare Association
BSB No. 803-205 Account No: 20370943***