



HOTLINE

March 2015 Edition

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Branch President's Report

I hope everyone had a very enjoyable break over the Christmas New Year period. The Military will be in the news a lot this year with both the centenary of Anzac and the operations in the Middle East. I just hope the Australian public in general will come to appreciate the sacrifices that members of the Australian Armed Forces and their families made, and are making, when serving their country.

In this issue of Camaraderie you will note there are articles on a proposed Military covenant and an article differentiating the ADF from police and other emergency services. If you have not read them I would commend these articles to you.

Can DVA help you?

When I was researching a presentation that I was to give to an Amberley based unit, I found that many people perceive that if they do not have operational or qualifying service they are not entitled to any help from DVA, and hence, in presentations on DVA services, they will usually turn off.

Their perception is far from the truth.

As well as any serving or ex-serving members being able to access VVCS, DVA will also assist in the treatment of a number of conditions such as Cancer, PTSD, Alcohol and Substance Use disorder. Eligibility extends to those who have had more than three years continuous full time service from 7 Dec 1972. In these circumstances, DVA provides for treatment only, not compensation. A medical condition needs to be accepted as related to military service to be eligible for compensation. DVA Factsheet HSV109 Non-Liability health Care provides more detail.

Whilst these benefits may not be all that relevant for those currently serving, it is nevertheless very important knowledge for members after discharge.

The limited general awareness of these DVA provisions is a concern and I will continue doing all I can to help our members and the Defence Community at large have a better understanding of the full range of DVA support available.

A link to the document is below.

<http://factsheets.dva.gov.au/factsheets/documents/HSV109%20Non-Liability%20Health%20Care.htm>

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If you think you may have an entitlement contact our senior advocate Wally Buldo, or if you are not located in SEQLD get in touch with your local ESO. Whilst you could submit a claim without help, using an advocate or pensions officer will ensure all the boxes are ticked and probably result in smoother progress with your claim.

Meetings

I often mention in my reports that I represent the DFWA at the Queensland Forum of Ex-service organisations (QFE), the DVA Queensland Consultation Forum (QCF) and the State Government Queensland Veterans Advisory Council (QVAC). If you are interested in knowing a little more about each of these bodies then check out the article later in Hotline where I provide a brief explanation of what they are about and DFWA's relationship with them.

Fostering Future Assistance Dogs

Young Diggers have asked if there are any members of DFWA who would be interested in fostering dogs. Young Diggers assess dogs from pounds and if a dog is assessed as suitable they have to take them very quickly or the dog may be euthanised hence the need for foster carers until a position comes up for the dog's training. Young Diggers will provide DFWA with an information sheet detailing what is required and the assistance available for the Foster Carers. More details will be advised in the next Hotline.

Rob Shortridge

President

DFWA Qld Branch

When it's time to go...

All of us who serve in the ADF must separate from our Service at some point, and to help with that process, each year the ADF conducts Transition Seminars in the capital cities and other areas where there are large defence communities e.g. Townsville and Brisbane. These information sessions for serving members and their families are designed to provide resources and information needed to help plan the transition from Service to civilian life. People usually attend in the vicinity of their current posting and can attend at any stage of their career. Topics covered include:

- ◆ various aspects of starting a new career or job,
- ◆ Reserve Service,
- ◆ Superannuation (military and civilian),
- ◆ managing finances, and
- ◆ the support available in civilian life, specifically for ex-service people.

It is a packed two day programme and it can be a become heavy going – death by PowerPoint; however, sessions are kept short and to the point, and coffee is in abundance! There are also opportunities to have more detailed follow-up discussions after the presentations.

Various support organisations (including DFWA wherever possible) usually have information stands at the seminars and they have representatives on hand to chat and provide follow-up information. Our DFWA Committee members in attendance at these seminars have been encouraged by the positive response from serving members and their partners to the support we offer, whether it is related to DVA matters, general military super information or other transition issues.

Serving members and their partners are encouraged to attend at least one seminar well before leaving the Service as the earlier members start preparing for their future, especially finances, the better off they and their family will be.

For more information, check out <http://www.defence.gov.au/transitions>.



Wally's Words...

Words of wisdom from our esteemed Treasurer/Senior Advocate

Wearing my Treasurer's hat:

Member renewal fees for 2015 are steadily arriving at the office. It is good to see that quite a few members are using the direct deposit method, however, some people have forgotten to include their name with the direct deposit details and this often makes it difficult to reconcile payments with individual members. I know the life of a treasurer is not meant to be easy, but I would find it very helpful if all future direct deposits included the member's name.

Here is a brief snapshot of our current membership:

Total members 754; made up of
194 annual subscribers (including 37 associates),
79 spouses and widows,
297 life subscribers,
60 two to five year subscribers, and
124 still to pay for 2015.

If you are in any doubt whether or not you are one of the 124 members with overdue subscriptions just call or email our office and we can let you know.

My last word on membership is that we face a continuing battle in trying to grow our member numbers, so if you know anyone who isn't a member and you think they might be interested, why not pass on your copy of *Camaraderie* after you have finished with it along with a suggestion that they consider joining.

Wearing my Advocacy hat:

I still come across a lot of Veterans and ex-service people, both female and male, who are unaware of the assistance that is available from DVA for conditions that are not necessarily Service caused. This treatment is provided under Section 85 (2) of the Veterans' Entitlement Act (VEA) for malignant neoplasia (all cancers), pulmonary tuberculosis or post-traumatic stress disorder.

I have also mentioned previously that changes to DVA Statements of Principles (SOPs) mean that cigarette smoking is now an additional factor for prostate cancer, and the perception of threat or harm from a menacing hostile or hazardous situation is an additional factor for PTSD.

If you want to know more about the DVA matters raised above and how they may affect your eligibility with a claim, call our office or send us an email and I will get in touch with you.

One final reminder, if you are a retired serviceman or woman, in receipt of a disability pension from DVA, but not entitled to a Service Pension, when you reach the age of 65 and get the age pension, have it paid through DVA. CentreLink deems your disability pension as income and will deduct \$0.50 for every dollar. If you get it paid through DVA, you will get the fifty cents back.

Until next time.



DVA SCAM ALERT!

The Scam season continues with DVA advising that it has become aware of yet another attempted fraud where a veteran was contacted and told they are entitled to a sum of money as compensation for cost of living expenses. Such scams usually then ask for bank account details and other personal information so that your 'bogus' funds can be processed.

If you receive an email, letter or phone call along these lines, hopefully by now, you know the drill! **Never respond to such requests with any personal information and if an email promising you money asks you to click on a link—DON'T.** If ever you are in doubt, call DVA and ask their advice.

When did you last visit the DVA Website?

The screenshot shows the DVA website homepage. At the top left is the Australian Government Department of Veterans' Affairs logo. A navigation menu includes Home, Benefits and Payments, Health and Wellbeing, Consultation and Grants, Providers, and Commemorations, Memorials and War Graves. Below the menu is a banner for 'Vol 30 No.4 Summer 2014' featuring the Australian flag and the text 'The Summer edition of Vet Affairs is an online only publication and is now available here on the DVA website.' A 'Need Help Now?' button is visible. The main content area is divided into four columns: 'Benefits and Payments' (listing Bureau of Assistance, Compensation, Eligibility, Income Support, etc.), 'Health and Wellbeing' (listing Health Cards, Home and Care, etc.), 'Consultation and Grants' (listing Consultation with the ex-service community, Grants, Reviews), and 'Commemorations and War Graves' (listing Anniversaries, Cemeteries, Education, etc.). Each column has a 'Read more about' link. At the bottom, there are sections for 'I am...', 'Popular', and 'News and Updates'.

If you haven't checked the DVA web pages in recent weeks, you will be surprised to find a totally new look. DVA has completed a major makeover of its important online resource www.dva.gov.au and it hopes clients will find the website more user friendly and easier to navigate.

DVA welcomes your feedback on the new look website. You can do this easily by sending a message through the contact page or by giving an instant rating at the bottom of any of the pages on the website.

So why not get online and give DVA you're your opinion?

Are you still where we think you are?

Please help us stay in touch with you by filling out the slip below and sending it to us whenever any of your contact details change. Alternatively send us a quick email or call our office.

DFWA Qld Branch Inc

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Please update my DFWA member contact details as follows:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Mobile: _____

Email: _____

Do you need a helping hand with personal care or home care?



The DVA Veterans' Home Care (VHC) scheme may be able to help you. The scheme is designed to help you continue living at home by providing a small amount of practical help. VHC is not designed to meet complex or high-level care needs. VHC is similar to the Commonwealth Home and Community Care (HACC) Program, which you may also access.

DVA has contracted organisations to provide assessment and coordination of VHC services. These organisations are known as **VHC Assessment Agencies**. Other organisations contracted to deliver VHC services are known as **VHC Service Providers**.

VHC Assessment Agencies assess your needs and approve services if appropriate. Where services are approved, the VHC Assessment Agency, in consultation with you, will make arrangements with a contracted VHC Service Provider to give you the help you need. Approvals are usually for about six-month periods. You are then reassessed and further help will depend on the outcome of that review assessment.

VHC Service Providers only deliver the services approved by VHC Assessment Agencies. The Service Provider will also collect a co-payment from you, only when it is stated on your VHC Care Plan. If a VHC Service Provider believes that your needs have changed, they can refer you to the VHC Assessment Agency for re-assessment.

Eligibility

If you are a Gold or White Card holder living at home and have been assessed as needing home care assistance by a VHC Assessment Agency, you may be eligible to support through VHC. Some restrictions may apply to accessing the full range of VHC services. The VHC Assessment Agency will advise you about this.

How to access VHC services

You must have an assessment by a VHC assessor who will discuss your circumstances to identify the range of services that may be needed. Most assessments are done over the phone, however if the VHC assessor determines that an assessment in the home may be of more benefit than over the phone, they will arrange a time and day suitable to you. To arrange an assessment call a VHC Assessment Agency on 1300 550 450.

Note: Calls should be made from a landline telephone, as calls from a mobile phone cannot be connected to a VHC Assessment Agency.

Services offered under VHC

VHC services include:

- Domestic Assistance
- Personal Care
- Safety-related Home and Garden Maintenance
- Respite Care.

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Domestic Assistance

Domestic Assistance provides support with household tasks, such as cleaning, ironing, shopping and bill paying, but is not to replace tasks you are capable of doing. Active participation in domestic activities has been shown to have a beneficial health effect, even for the frail and very elderly. There are no strict thresholds for Domestic Assistance as it depends on your assessed need, taking into account VHC is not designed to meet complex or high-level needs. This service attracts a small co-payment.

Personal Care

Personal Care includes assistance with daily self-care tasks that you, because of illness, disability or frailty are unable to do yourself. It is limited to up to one-and-a-half hours per week for low-level personal care needs. If you have long term, high level personal care needs beyond one-and-a-half hours per week, the DVA Community Nursing Program may provide the personal care required. This service attracts a small co-payment.

Safety-related Home and Garden Maintenance

The focus of Safety-related Home and Garden Maintenance is to minimise environmental health and safety hazards that may impact on you. To keep the home safe and habitable, work may involve minor maintenance or repair work, which may be carried out by a handyman. Safety-related Home and Garden Maintenance does not include major repairs or services requiring a qualified tradesperson such as gutter replacement, major landscaping or garden tasks such as tree-felling or tree removal.

Garden tasks such as branch lopping, lawn mowing and pruning can only be undertaken if an environmental health or safety hazard exists. Routine, cosmetic or ornamental gardening services such as weeding, maintaining flower beds, regular lawn mowing, or pruning of roses **are not** available under this service.

Safety-related Home and Garden Maintenance is limited to 15 hours in a 12 month period and is based on your assessed need. The total 15 hours will not automatically be approved. This service attracts a co-payment.

Respite Care

Respite Care gives a break to a carer by temporarily relieving them of their caring responsibilities. DVA offers Respite Care to:

- the carer of a Gold or White Card holder
- a Gold or White Card holder who is a carer, or
- a Gold or White Card holder who is a self-carer (for Residential Respite only).

There are three types of Respite Care available through VHC: In-home Respite, Residential Respite and Emergency Short-Term Home Relief (ESTHR).

If you would like further information on the programs available, visit the DVA homecare webpage: <http://www.dva.gov.au/health-and-wellbeing/home-and-care/veterans-home-care-vhc> or contact DVA:

Metropolitan callers: **133 254**

Regional callers: **1800 555 254**

Email: generalenquiries@dva.gov.au

Meetings...Meetings...Meetings!

DFWA is represented on a number of veteran related bodies in Queensland including the **Queensland Forum of Ex-service organisations (QFE)**, the **DVA Queensland Consultation Forum (QCF)** and the State Government **Queensland Veterans Advisory Council (QVAC)**. This article explains a little more about each of them.

QVAC

The Queensland Veterans' Advisory Council assists in providing a voice between Queensland's veteran community and government with strategies to promote the wellbeing of veterans and their families. There are ten Council members including Ben Roberts Smith VC MG and a number of representatives from Queensland ex-service organisations and community organisations. The first meeting was on 9 Apr 2014 and since that time, the Council has been involved in a number of initiatives that will be of benefit to the veterans' community of Queensland. These matters include the Next of Kin Memorial Medal; an employment proposal for the Qld Public Service; and changes to public housing rent.

The QVAC is administered by the Queensland ANZAC Century Committee secretariat.

Every state in Australia, with the exception of Tasmania, now has a State Veterans' Council in varying forms.

QCF

The Queensland Consultative Forum provides a mechanism for regular consultation and discussion between the Deputy Commissioner and Ex-Service Organisations (ESOs) to discuss issues that concern the veteran and defence communities arising from the range of DVA operations including: health and aged care including hospital and community based care; health and well-being; income support; and compensation and rehabilitation. It is also a forum for raising emerging issues for currently serving and recently separated ADF members.

The QCF aims to enhance the ex-service community's understanding of DVA's service delivery performance in the Queensland through improved communication and information sharing between DVA and the ex-service community.

QFE

The QFE arose from the Kindred Organisations Committee of the RSL. The RSL, and in particular, Queensland Deputy President of the day, Kel Ryan, provided strong support to the forum. However, it was soon realised that to demonstrate its independence from any particular ex-service organisation [ESO], the new forum had to stand alone. This was agreed by all parties, and in 2008, the QFE was formed with Kel Ryan as its inaugural Chairman.

The QFE sets out to identify the issues of greatest importance to its member organisations and to use its broad representation to take these issues to Government by the most appropriate means. QFE is a refreshing organisation with a pleasing culture of respect for one another's beliefs and values and a readiness to listen to another point of view. It also has links both through the national offices of its member organisations and through the Queensland Consultation Forum and other government advisory bodies including the Prime Minister's Advisory Council (PMAC).

QFE meets bi-monthly and invites other interested ex-service organisations to attend as observers and if so required, to apply for membership. QFE is proof positive that the ESOs are able and willing to work together on behalf of the broad Defence family. No one ESO has all of the answers but working together we can achieve much.

The QFE quickly recognised that there was no single point of entry into the State Government. Other states, particularly SA and Victoria had a State Veterans Council. As a direct result of the representations by the QFE, Queensland now has a Queensland Veterans Advisory Council that provides direct input to the State Government on Veterans issues.

Welfare and Pension Officer Training



Ever wonder where the DFWA Welfare and Pension Officers come from. And what about the DFWA Advocates who assist ex-service people appeal their claims to the Veterans' Review Board or the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. How are they trained and qualified to do these jobs?

Well, the Training and Information Programme (TIP) is a joint effort between the Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA) and Ex-Service Organisations (ESOs) one of which is of course, the DFWA. There is a bit of a national and State based bureaucracy to develop and manage the courses which are conducted by experienced people from the ESOs, DVA and other support organisations. Training Courses offered in Queensland are:

Welfare Consolidated Level 1 and Level 2. This is the “starter” 3 day course and covers the welfare and support services available to ex-service people. There is a wide variety of services available.

Level 1 Compensation Courses. These courses cover the preparation of basic claims under the three main Acts:

Veterans Entitlement Act 1986 (VEA)

Military Rehabilitation & Compensation Act 2004 (MRCA) (3 day course)

Safety Rehabilitation & Compensation Act 1988 (SRCA) (2 day course)

Advanced Compensation Level 2. These cover more complex claims under the different Acts and introduce the concept of how to challenge DVA decisions. The VEA and MRCA Acts are covered in a combined 4 day course and the SCRA on a 2 day course.

Advocacy Level 3. This is a 3 day course designed to train experienced Level 2 Compensation practitioners to act as Advocates for appeals submitted to the Veterans' Review Board.

Tribunal Advocacy (TAC) – Level 4. This is a 6 day residential course at the University of Canberra and trains experience Advocate to take appeals to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal

There are other short courses covering Electronic Tools, SoP User (Statements of Principles related to medical conditions), War/Defence Widows and VVRS (Veterans' Vocational Rehabilitation Scheme). Courses in Queensland are conducted at New Farm, Ipswich, Tweed Heads, Cairns, Caloundra, Maroochydore and Townsville.

DFWA Queensland has vacancies for Pensions and Welfare Officers throughout the State. Courses are free and applications require endorsement from DFWA. Why not give it a go? We could certainly use your help. There are several courses running throughout the State this year. You can call or email our office if you would like to know more.