

DFWA NSW BRANCH

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A NEWS SHEET PRODUCED FOR THE INTEREST OF NSW MEMBERS MARCH 2015

GREETINGS FROM MICHAEL STUART-WATT NSW BRANCH PRESIDENT

As 2015 has already struck with a vengeance in the political sphere, I wish you a calm and ordered Year ahead. I know in our own NSW Office, under Joy's watchful gaze, our Executive is getting our house in order and examining ways of improving our systems generally. This will help improve Computing power and connectivity, purifying our Member Database and attending to Housekeeping matters.

Late last year, you may have learned that there was considerable hue and cry over the less than generous 1.5% per annum pay offer as part of the ADF Workplace Remuneration Negotiations, and some cuts to Leave provisions etc.

The cuts were subsequently restored by CDF, but not before the Alliance of Defence Service Organisations (ADSO), led by the DFWA, reminded the Government of the recently expanded missions by the ADF in the Middle East Area of Operations.

Ongoing extensive commitments by the ADF as an instrument of Government, together with demands on DVA and a number of Service organisations supporting Veterans and Families, remind us of the complex nature of military service and the needs that follow. We continue to highlight Personnel needs to MPs, Senators, Ministerial staff and Commentators, irrespective of political leanings.

The DFWA in general is committed to maintaining the quality of life amongst members, former members and families of the 'Defence Community'. Sometimes this can be contentious and misunderstood. Our approach is not based on any 'false sense of entitlement' but in recognition of a legitimate commitment to serve. In providing advocacy, we attempt to find the best solutions and outcomes that will benefit members and non-members. All we ask is that you recognise that we are purely voluntary in our nature and act with the best of intention. We don't get things right every time, but we learn which path will deliver the best outcome. We also work collegiately with other Service organisations where more effort can be brought to bear.

Of course we are always looking for new members, assistance of any kind and new Executive and Committee members. If you have a desire or passion to represent current or former serving members, please consider how you might help.

The NSW Branch is on the lookout for a Treasurer to take over from our highly committed and talented member, Brian Armour, who's looking to hang-up his MYOB Program in September.

While there have been a few 'nibbles' I seek out some firm candidates who are up for a challenge to take on this task. You can be assured that our Branch is in a healthy & organised state with a proven system in place. **Call me, Michael Stuart-Watt, AH on 0438 465 282.**

YOU MAY NOT BE AWARE OF NEW CHANGES TO THE VETERAN'S CHILDREN EDUCATION SCHEME

If meeting all other eligibility criterion for the Veterans' Children Education Scheme (VCES) and the Military Rehabilitation & Compensation Act (MRCA) Education and Training Scheme, apprentices and trainees may be considered eligible students under the Veterans' Entitlement Act (VEA) or an eligible young person under MRCA and are therefore eligible for benefits under the Education Schemes.

All apprentices and trainees must agree on a training plan with their employer, which the employer is required to lodge with an Australian Apprenticeships Centre. In both instances, off-the-job study is complemented by on-the-job instruction which together may be viewed as engaging the apprentice or trainee in full-time education.

All those in receipt of a Totally, Permanent Incapacity (TPI) pension, War Widows pension and Extreme Disablement Adjustment (EDA) pension who have children under the age of 25, who are attending school, TAFE or University, are eligible for assistance from the VCES regardless of their income, assets or children's income.

Veteran grandparents with custody of grand children students who are eligible can make applications for assistance under VCES.

Some new TPIs, War Widows and EDAs may not be aware of these Education Schemes. VCES eligibility has also been extended to the children or former children of Veterans with Vietnam Service, where the child is diagnosed by an appropriately qualified professional as having a depressive disorder, or in the opinion of an appropriately qualified professional, is vulnerable.

For more information, phone DVA on **133 254** and ask for the VCES State Secretary, or email: vcés@dva.gov.au

A 'THANK YOU' NOTE FROM A MEMBER

Folks, I am writing to express my thanks and appreciation for the hard work and tireless effort that Dr Barry Wright undertook on my behalf in a recent Veteran's claim that I submitted. Barry was most respectful and professional throughout and made me most comfortable during the process.

I would never have achieved a more than successful result without his assistance. Please give him my special thanks and say hello to all the gang.

The Members should be grateful for the excellent work you all do at the DFWA

Yours sincerely, Neil S Murray.

OUR CASE MANAGERS CANNOT WIN ALL THE CASES

Often a claimant's medical history is very sketchy and difficult to read. Our Case Managers, John King and Barry Wright, need to rely on a medical practitioner to support the claimant's contention that their service contributed to their condition. The examiner cannot second guess such things.

When trying to get a successful claim for a **ComSuper** medical pension the applying client needs to realise that the various schemes have clear classification of incapacity for civil employment.

If your medical condition which brought about your discharge can be medically demonstrated that you are physically or mentally unable to work using the skills and knowledge you have gained before and during service then the **ComSuper** Board can classify the incapacity as 'A' – 60%, 'B' -30% or 'C' – Nil. The Board considers the types of employment that might be typical for your education and skills.

Once you get a classification of A or B you can be subject to a reassessment in future years and **ComSuper** will send you to a doctor for that assessment. Some of those who undergo such a reassessment often get downgraded one category. Often our Case Officers advise the client to appeal while getting further medical opinion and to seek a second opinion through **ComSuper** (this is based on the need to ensure that the client does not fall in the trap of saying to the assessing

Doctor "I am pretty good". The Doctor cannot assess your condition if you are not up front in telling him/her exactly how your condition is restricting your life.

Most cases that follow this advice with regard to an appeal succeed in having the downgrading revoked.

Similar approaches to assessing doctors are important in regard to DVA claims under the various Acts covering compensation.

Recently this Office had a client seeking compensation through the SRCA for a head injury in recruit training which lead to a change in the client's behaviour and capabilities and subsequent discharge. The initial treatment and documentation and follow-up monitoring were deficient. Subsequent diagnosis by specialists after 50years could not be positive that the original injury was linked to his condition. Unfortunately the claim was not accepted.

Your Case Managers cannot win all cases given failures in recording, documentation and the lack of a future view.

IF YOU NEED HELP WITH A DVA CLAIM

The DFWA NSW Branch offers a FREE Claim Advisory Service in Victoria Barracks Paddington Ground Floor, Bldg 96, every Tuesday & Wednesday between 9.00 – 3.00
John King - Wednesdays (02) 8335 5487 Barry Wright - Tuesday (02) 8335 5447

NSW BRANCH DONATIONS SINCE NOVEMBER 2015

Thank you for, your generous donations. Unfortunately, between 1 July and 3 November 2014 some members' donations were omitted. Please accept our apologies and those donations are recorded separately here.

Donations from 1 Jul to 3 Nov 2014

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Just a gentle reminder to renew your subscription if you have not already done so, numbers count when lobbying politicians.