



# VVAA QLD POLICIES

- 18 NOVEMBER 2009

It's been some time since the Association policies on issues involving Australian veterans and their families were published. It's important that our members and other Ex-Service Organisations know what we support, what we don't support and where we stand. They'll be updated from time to time as new issues emerge and existing ones are implemented or are overtaken by time. So here they are:

## **Advocates, Paid**

Opposes the creation of a second tier of paid advocates as recommended by the Dunt Report

## **Aged Care**

Secure and manage the provision of aged care facilities for veterans, providing assistance for veterans in meeting the cost of retirement village type accommodation.

## **Alternative Medicines**

Examine the role of alternative medicines and therapies in the treatment of conditions suffered by veterans

Accept alternative medicines and therapies for eligible veterans

## **Bereavement Payments**

Provide un-partnered veterans with the same bereavement payment benefits and partnered veterans

Provide disability bereavement payment equal to six fortnightly payments to the estate of un-partnered veterans

## **Funeral Benefits**

Increase the funeral benefit in line with MCRA funeral benefit

Discontinue offsetting of funeral and bereavement benefits in the calculation of funeral benefits

Provide the same funeral benefit for partnered and un-partnered veterans

Introduce a mechanism whereby funeral benefits keep pace with increases in the cost of living

Establish parity between VEA and MRCA funeral benefits for entitled veterans

## **Building Excellence in Support and Training (BEST)>**

Acknowledge the value provided by services funded through the BEST funding

Maintain BEST funding levels to ensure that medium-term commitments entered into by ESOs are maintained

Acknowledge that BEST funding and Grants In Aid are incompatible and revert to separate arrangements

Provide adequate funding and resources to respite for veterans carers

John Smith President VVAA Queensland: [president@vva queensland.asn.au](mailto:president@vva queensland.asn.au)



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## Compensation, General

Amend the term "pension" to read "compensation" within the relevant Acts

Declare obesity to be a medical condition in the same manner as other conditions resulting in overweight are treated

Declare stress to be a condition that is manifested within other diagnosed conditions such as IHD, hypertension and psychiatric conditions.

Define a specific level of vision loss as a test for "blindness"

Enable veterans to flag existing conditions as unchanged and remove them from reassessment when submitting new claims

## DFRB/DFRDB

Cease the use of outdated 1962 actuarial tables for DFRB/DFRDB.

Cease recovery of commutation once repayment is complete

Provide taxation relief through recognition of the 5% of salary contribution of military members to DFRB/DFRDB

## Disability Payment Indexation

Index all disability payments, whether fortnightly or lump sum, at least twice yearly against the greater of Consumer Price Index (CPI) or Male Total Average Weekly Earnings (MTAWE)

## Disabled Descendants

Implement an assessment procedure to reinstate provision of medical treatment from DVA resources to those descendants of deceased veterans who would otherwise have been supported by their parents.

Provide an income support supplement, similar to that paid to war widows, for qualifying descendants

Establish criteria based upon the "reasonable hypothesis" standard, for medical conditions or deformity claimed by the descendant to be a result of the service of the parent.

Where such a link from parent to descendant is proven, provide for the descendant in the same manner as if the descendant were a veteran

## Education Support

Extend education support eligibility to veterans in receipt of the General and Intermediate Rate of pension

## General Rate of Pension

Index the General Rate of Pension in the same way as the Special Rate and Extreme Disablement Adjustment

## Gold Card

Enable the extension of the Gold Card to the spouse/partner of an entitled individual



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## **Historians**

Veterans, their advocates or pension officers to have the earliest possible access to historian's reports in order to seek clarification or correction

## **Intergenerational Health Study**

Supports the conduct of the study

## **Legal Aid**

Veterans to have access to legal aid in every State, regardless of the type of case

## **Medals and Awards**

Conduct reviews into Imperial and foreign awards for those who served in Vietnam

Introduce processes and procedures to overcome long delays in the issue of medal entitlements to Service and ex-Service personnel

Extend award criteria for the Australia Active Service Medal to include certain logistic support and evacuation operations

## **Mental Health**

Improve and simplify mental health assessment, treatment and compensation regimes, including psychiatric condition acceptance criteria

Provide adequate funding to ensure that veterans have timely and adequate access to mental health professionals, programs and facilities, including specialist hospital treatment

## **Names on Databases and Rolls of Honour**

Record the names of all deployed Australian Service men and women who are KIA, DOW or DOI as a result of their service on the Roll of Honour in the Australian War Memorial and all biographical databases held by the Armed Services and government agencies

## **Nurses, Civilian**

Support civilian nurses who served in Vietnam in obtaining compensation through the means outlined in their contracts, except where they came under direct Australian military command

## **Pharmaceutical Co-payments**

DVA concession card holders to be deemed to have reached the Pharmaceutical Benefits Safety Net threshold at the commencement of each calendar year

Where a RPBS item is priced above the lowest priced brand or product in a therapeutic group of medicines the concession card holder may seek reimbursement from DVA where:



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- (i) the illness or injury is an accepted disability; and
- (ii) the treating physician affirms in writing that the higher priced item is the only appropriate item for that treatment

## **Qualifying Service**

Retain the definitions and application of warlike and non-warlike service

Retain the eligibility rules as they apply to membership of the ADF or a civilian under direct command of the ADF; being allotted for full-time duty within a defined area of operations and maintenance of the port to port provisions

Preserve the link between warlike and qualifying service for the purposes of entitlement to Service Pension

Allocate eligibility in an equitable and consistent manner

Ensure that ADF operations are added to the schedules in a timely manner

Introduce a category of Hazardous Service to attract the beneficial standard of proof

Opposes the granting of qualifying service to those warned for deployment but not deployed due to illness, disease, injury or cessation of conflict

## **Special Rate of Pension**

Recommends automatic indexation twice-yearly to maintain parity

## **Statements of Principle and Standards of Proof**

Australian government to acknowledge historical changes in the standard of proof and address the diminution of the beneficial standard of proof for veterans

Acknowledge RMA's decision-making outside the application of the VEA veteran standard of proof

Correct the narrow interpretation of wording within SoPs

Address the practical difficulties associated with an objective test for the existence of a stressor for psychiatric disorder SoPs

Address the failure to recognise the validity of a single or less than mainstream medical opinion or limited medico/scientific research

Correct the situation where the opinion of a selected group of doctors is used to establish a legal standard, turning medical opinion into law



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## **Superannuation (Commonwealth Employees)**

Supports the indexation of DFRB, DFRDB, CSS and PSS superannuation by the greater of CPI or MATAWE as articulated by DFW

## **Terminology**

Endorses the terms Killed in Action (KIA), Wounded in Action (WIA) and Died of Wounds (DOW) as the only terms to be used in relation to the death or wounding of deployed Australian Service men and women in action

Endorses the terms Died of Illness and Died of Injury (DOI) to be used in relation to the death of deployed Australian Service men and women not in action

## **Veterans and Veterans' Families Counselling Service (VVCA)**

Remove time restrictions on access to counselling services to divorced/separated spouses/partners

## **Veterans Childrens Education Scheme (VCES)**

Expand to include the children of veterans whose disabilities are assessed at not less than 70% and who are in receipt of Service Pension or part Disability pension from CENTRELINK

## **Veterans' Entitlement Act**

Conduct a full review of s120 (Standard of Proof), including the use of historian's reports

## **Veterans Review Board (VRB)**

Opposes the appointment of Mental Health professionals to the VRB which is under consideration as a result of the Dunt Report on the basis that medical specialists advise the VRB but are not members

## **Vocational Rehabilitation**

Create a two tier structure for vocational rehabilitation Implement the VVAA provisions for tier one veterans between the ages of 19 and 50

Extend the provisions of the over-50 tier two veterans to include training related to community work

## **Voluntary Work**

Acknowledge the value of veterans doing voluntary work and ensure that voluntary work continues to be excluded from consideration for the purposes of compensation payments

## **War Widow(ers)**



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Adjust the War Widow(ers) pension to 75% of the Special Rate while retaining current entitlements and benefits regardless of the rate received by the partner prior to death

Continue eligibility to the Income Support Supplement, thus giving the war widow(er)s a minimum annual income of \$14,079 which, with the Income Support Supplement is raised to \$17,329.00 per annum

Provide all war widow(er)s with entitlement to the DVA Concession Card, whether or not they are in receipt of the Income Support Supplement

## **War Graves**

Maintain the graves of those who died in Vietnam as official war graves, whether or not the funeral was conducted privately