

**VIETNAM VETERANS ASSOCIATION of AUSTRALIA
VICTORIAN BRANCH (INC)**



MELBOURNE WEST SUB-BRANCH

NEWSLETTER

December 2008

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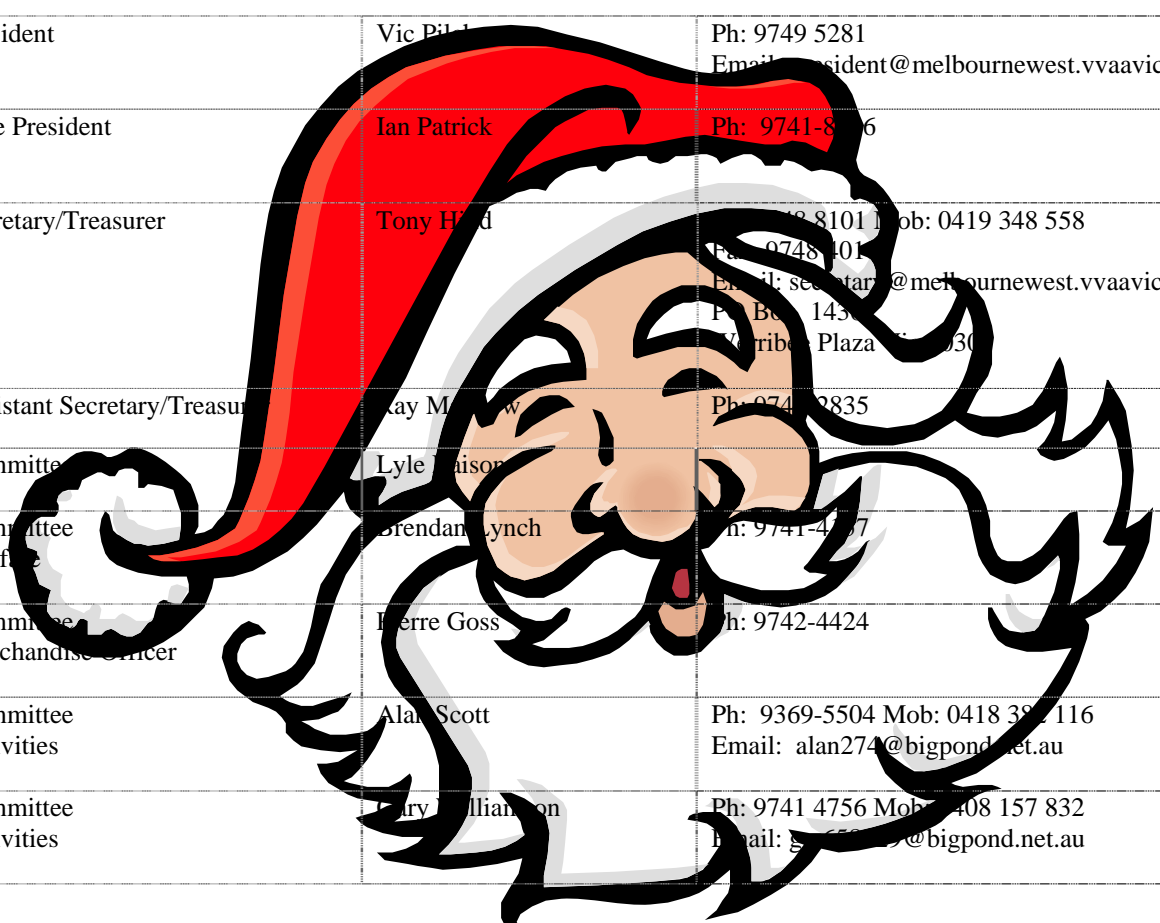
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Western Suburbs Veterans' and Services Centres

12 Smith Street (PO Box 981)
Melton 3337
Phone: 9746 9582 Fax: 9746 9583
Mondays to Thursdays

Kelly Park Community Centre
4 Synnot Street (next to RSL Club)
Werribee 3030

Ph: 9731 1608 (Wed only)
Wednesdays 10:00 till 14:00
Email: werribeevetcentre@westnet.com.au

Pensions: **Positions Vacant**
Welfare: Vic Pilch 9749 5281

Inner Metro Veterans' and Services Centre

Ph: 9282 3518 Fax: 9282 7854

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Editor: Sub-Branch Committee -- Publisher: Tony Hind

From the President:



The month of November was quiet busy with only one Pension Officer to do all the claims. We have lost both our local Pension Officers due to personal issues. Melton (our parent office) is helping in the meantime but it involves travel from Melton to Werribee on a regular basis. We are desperately looking for someone with the skills to be trained up.

There will be several courses next year. There will be one in Sale in February, one in Bendigo in May and one in DVA Melbourne September. These are 2 day courses and at the completion the applicant is qualified to a basic level 1 Pension Officer. There are other associated courses that need to be completed after the level 1 course.

All the Members that turned up at the two schools for Remembrance Day I thank you all. From the correspondence received from the schools it was most appreciated. I was on duty at the Shrine and could not attend myself.

Several of our Members are feeling poorly and all the best to Bill, Pierre, Gary and the others and hope you all improve quickly.

As we have no Pension Officers we still submitted 5 claims to DVA with help from the Melton Veterans Centre. Visitors to the Centre totalled 23, there were some 105 volunteer hours and Welfare matters totalled 22.

The Veterans' Centre will be closed from 10th December to 28th January 2009. The Council will be doing some work on the building which may delay our re-opening. If any assistance is required you can leave a message on our machine on 9731-1608 or call the RSL on 9741-5525.

I would like to thank the Werribee RSL and the Melbourne West Vietnam Veterans Association for support to the Veterans' Centre over the year. Without their assistance our ability to help and support the Veteran Community would be severely curtailed.

Daryl and John (RSL) are shouting lunch for our last day and we have the Sub-Branch Christmas dinner at the Italian Social Club on the 19th December. So far there are 41 people going who have booked and paid.



As this is my last report for 2008 I would like to thank all the staff and helpers for all the time and effort that they have put in, I would also like to say a special thanks to Ray for all the he has put in while Tony has been away on holidays (welcome back Tony) so to you all and your families I wish you all a merry Christmas & a happy and prosperous and safe New Year

Vic Pilch

Honour the Dead ... but fight like hell for the living

From the Secretary/Treasurer:



G'Day everyone and Merry Christmas. I have finally returned home after my six month trip around the Kimberly and Western Australia.

I would like to especially thank Ray Matthew for bearing the brunt of the work while I was away and it is certainly a lot of work and even more so around times like badge week.

I mentioned it in the last newsletter that there are a lot of Vietnam Vets and their Partners touring around the country in a caravan, motor home or fifth wheeler. Most of them, including me, have the colours on the van and fly the flag when we are camped.

It's that time of year again where annual subscriptions are due for 2009. In this newsletter I have included a subscription reminder. I know some of you have paid, so if you get one please ignore it.

Enclosed:

- A Subscription notice (disregard if you have paid)
- A stamped return envelope for your subscriptions and Committee nomination
- Notice of the AGM
- A nomination form for the Committee

Our AGM will also be held on Sunday 1st February and an AGM Notice and Committee nomination forms are also included in this mailing. We would really like to see more people on the Committee to spread the work load more.

If someone is handy with a computer and would like to take on the production of the quarterly newsletter – that would be great.

We have a few Members on the sick list and I wish them a speedy recovery.

I would also like to say a very special welcome to the new Members of the Sub-Branch and their Partners. The number of Vets on our books at the end of 2008 will be sixty two (62) and there have already been a couple of new ones for 2009.



Stay well

Tony

A father asked his 10-year old son if he knew about the birds and the bees. 'I don't want to know,' the child said, bursting into tears. 'Promise me you won't tell me.' Confused, the father asked what was wrong. The boy sobbed, 'When I was six, I got the 'There's no Easter Bunny' speech. At seven, I got the 'There's no Tooth Fairy' speech. When I was eight, you hit me with the 'There's no Santa' speech.

Honour the Dead ... but fight like hell for the living

If you're going to tell me that grown-ups don't really get laid, I'll have nothing left to live for.'

From the Asst. Secretary/Treasurer:

REMEMBRANCE DAY – 11TH NOVEMBER 2008



A number of our Members were fortunate to be invited to Thomas Chirnside Primary School in Wyndham Vale to join the children at their Remembrance Day ceremony.

The School conducts a ceremony on ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day each year to give the children some appreciation of the sacrifices made by their grandfathers etc.

The ceremony takes place at the school's cenotaph that was built by Danny Markovic, Bill Reynolds and other volunteers from our Sub-Branch to provide a lasting memorial to the fallen. You will all be pleased to know that the lone pine is thriving.

During the ceremony the children were quiet and respectful (even if the younger ones didn't quite know what it was all about) with all wearing their poppies and each class laying a wreath.

The ceremony itself was quite moving:

- Brendan Lynch addressed the children on the meaning of Remembrance (Armistice) Day;
- Year 6 children read 'In Flanders Fields', the response 'We Shall Keep the Faith', and a poem 'Please Wear A Poppy';
- WW2 veteran Reg Loats recited 'The Ode'; and
- The Last Post, Reveille and the National Anthem were all played and a minute's silence observed.

We then mixed with the children then enjoyed a beautiful morning tea prepared by the teachers and parents. The Principal (Graeme), School Council, teachers and parents at the School should be commended for recognizing such an important date in our country's history and passing the message on to future generations.

A very special day for all concerned.

Ray Matthew
12/11/2008



Photos courtesy of Bethany Knight

Honour the Dead ... but fight like hell for the living

SECOND INTAKE REUNION

March 2009, Geelong, Vic

HELLO EVERYONE

Here I am at last, sorry for the delay in writing. I have been waiting for numbers of people attending the reunion. We have been ringing around for answers as we have not received many responses from letters we have sent out. Currently we have 48 people attending the reunion with 12 people undecided. So everything seems to be under control!! HA HA HA!

I have opened a bank account for the reunion. Estimating costs has been a difficult job especially as we are not sure of numbers. If more people attend the costs will reduce for the other attendees.....so ring around your mates!!

Attached to this letter are three forms. The first form is the registration form which confirms your intention to attend the reunion. Tell us how many people (including names) are attending and return as soon as possible. To help with catering can you please inform us of any dietary requirements or other matters to be made aware of to help us assist you.

The second form is a copy of the bank details and the cost associated with the reunion. The third form is the program for the week which allows time for catching up with mates and relaxing.

If you require more information or help please let us know. Robyn and I wish you all a happy and festive Christmas and look forward to seeing you all in the New Year.

Regards



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A couple had been married for 50 years.

*They were sitting at the breakfast table one morning when the wife says,
'Just think, fifty years ago we were sitting here at this breakfast table
together.'*

*'I know,' the old man said. 'We were probably sitting here naked as a jaybird
fifty years ago.'*

'Well,' Granny snickered. 'Let's relive some old times.'

Where upon, the two stripped to the buff and sat down at the table.

Honour the Dead ... but fight like hell for the living

'You know, honey,' the little old lady breathlessly replied, 'My nipples are as hot for you today as they were fifty years ago.'
'I wouldn't be surprised,' replied Gramps. 'One's in your coffee and the other is in your oatmeal'

12 December 2008

Dear Colleagues,

The following piece may be of interest to your members.
Please feel free to include it in your next newsletter or any other forms of communication as you see fit.

Best wishes,



Mark Creamer

Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health – Bigger, Better and Moving to a New Home

Following several years of growth in staff numbers and research projects, the Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health (ACPMH) in Melbourne is preparing to move to new and larger premises.

While the move takes the ACPMH from the Austin Repatriation Hospital in Heidelberg, the Centre's home since its inception, the ACPMH will continue to work closely with the Departments of Veterans' Affairs and Defence in all aspects of veterans' mental health – from recruitment through to transitioning from combat to life as a civilian and a veteran, according to the Centre's Director, Professor Mark Creamer.

“ACPMH remains deeply committed to improving mental health outcomes for veterans and their families. The new premises, located closer to the city centre and the University of Melbourne, will consolidate the position of ACPMH as the leading centre in Australia for policy advice, research and training in the field of posttraumatic mental health,” he said.

“There has never been a time when so much attention has been focused on mental health effects of trauma, both in civilians and in the defence forces. The move will allow us to grow and to increase our work on the prevention, recognition and treatment of these disabling problems and diagnosis of PTSD. We expect this growth will provide benefits to all our stakeholders, including the veteran community, to whom we owe so much.”

**New details: Level 1, 340 Albert Street, East Melbourne, VIC 3002
Tel: (03) 9936 5100; Fax: (03) 9936 5199; Email and website unchanged**

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Returned & Services League of Australia (Victorian Branch) Inc

Veterans' Affairs & Aged Care Forum

held on Wednesday 8 October 2008 at 2pm at ANZAC House

Notes from Meeting

1. Jeff Jackson opened the meeting with the Ode and welcomed the Guest Speakers and all present.

2. **Attendance / Apologies:**

3. **Guest Presentation: Mary-Ann Calabrese, Occupational Therapy Group**

Mary-Anne presented on the types of services offered by Occupational Therapists and who is eligible to receive it.

Eligibility:

- Gold Cards eligible for treatment
- White Cards if for treatment in relation to the accepted disability
- Spouses of veterans not entitled
- For general public, medicare covers the assessment.

Services include:

- DVA RAP – assesses the need for rehabilitation aids that may assist safety at home. A medical practitioner's referral is required.
- Homefront – specifically assesses the safety of your home. All veterans entitled to one assessment each year and up to \$196 toward safety items or modifications. No medical practitioner referral required.
- Driving assessments - medical practitioner makes a referral for an Occupational Therapy assessment (NB: costs not covered by DVA or medicare – unless DVA accepts service related).
 - Off road – assessment made of vision, physical ability, then a test written / picture is completed. This is a screening only, not pass / fail test
 - On road assessment with qualified assessor and modified vehicles (ie. assessor has pedals)
 - If safe to resume driving – Occupational Therapist writes to Vic Roads
 - If considered unsafe to keep driving – licence needs to be suspended
 - Occasionally there is a need to undertake lessons to refresh skills
 - Restricted licence may be recommended – ie to drive around own local area only

Questions raised in relation to Home Front and RAP entitlements

- \$196 each year
- This amount is non cumulative
- Available for all DVA entitled persons with a gold card, or white card where appropriate.

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Guest Presentation: Jan Taylor, Vivir Healthcare

Vivir Healthcare offer a range of allied health services. They provide services for DVA entitled veterans (accepted provider of DVA) and also for private clients. Services offered include:

- Physio – exercise and activity programs, including fall prevention programs.
- Dietetics & Podiatry – for those with diabetes, heart disease, caeliac disease
- If accessing services under DVA entitlement, GP referral required.
- If non-DVA entitled, can self initiate referral.

4. Home & Hospital Visiting Program

4.1 Statistics Report presented by Jane, refer to attachment.

4.2 Victorian Volunteer Small Grants

- *Victorian Volunteer Small Grants – grants available up to \$2500 for small equipment. Initially there was no deadline to submission for the grants, however now must be lodged by 17th October 2008.*
- *Can apply as single organisation or as individual.*
- *Sub-Branches apply on own behalf (must be incorporated). For those that are not incorporated please inform Mike Annette by 15th October and ANZAC House will apply on your behalf. If you receive a grant it must be acquitted. You must demonstrate that you spent money. If you receive the grant for fuel, use Visitors Record Book and relate petrol receipt with kilometers traveled ie. date, kms, where went etc, and send this data to A&HS. If do not wish to apply, please send Jane the figures on kilometers travelled so that we can apply next year as an organisation. This will ensure that next year we have better data so we will be able to apply as an organisation.*

Questions and comments from the floor:

Other Sub-Branches may not do visits; felt that they should not be included in grant money received.

Asked if it was compulsory to do with ANZAC House or can do own? Incorporated Sub-Branches can apply themselves. Circular from CEO was sent in mail out last week, which detailed how to complete a single application form. However, for Sub-Branches applying themselves, they need to make an estimate as to petrol usage when doing visits.

Asked if the grant money can it be used to run the community bus. As running a community bus to pick up veterans and war widows is a legitimate welfare costs, it can be paid from welfare funds.

Asked if you can only apply for one \$5,000 grant. Only one grant can be applied for by an individual Sub-Branch. Can get up to \$2,500 for petrol. But even if you apply for multiple items, you can still only get up to \$5,000. ANZAC House can get more as an organisation.

5. Welfare & Aged Care Issues

5.1 Personal Alarms (handout)

Wendy provided information on Personal Alarms from Tunstall. A&HS met with the Business Development Consultant from Tunstall and were advised that this service is designed for people living on their own or with a frail partner and who may be at risk due to advanced aged, ill health or a disability; it enables them to summon assistance in an emergency at the touch of a button. For veterans who are DVA entitled, they will be assessed and all costs covered by DVA. For those veterans who are not covered by DVA, A&HS have negotiated a special cost for this category of veterans. For information about the costs please contact A&HS on 9655 5548.

5.2 Macular Degeneration Information Sessions (handout)

Wendy advised that a mobile screening unit, known as a Vision Van, will travel around Australia assessing those at risk of Age-Related Macular Degeneration. A qualified optometrist will be on board to perform macula checks in just 15 minutes. In Victoria the Van will visit Wendouree at the end of November and Ballarat, Balwyn, Carrum, Mornington, Sorrento, and Shepparton in the first week of December. Bookings are essential. Please call A&HS on 9655 5548 if you wish any further information.

Following the question relating to costs of treatment for Macular Degeneration at last forum, Wendy discussed Lucentis. The drug is on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and also on the Repatriation Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, therefore subject to co-payments and safety net thresholds.

5.3 Veterans' MATES Survey

Wendy advised that the recent Veterans' MATES survey that was sent to veterans in September 2008 is now complete. For those veterans that did receive a survey, responses were due 30th September, however late responses will be accepted until 14th October.

5.4 Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (handout)

Jeff spoke to the Flash Cab Wheelchair accessible vehicles. These are advertised as the most affordable wheelchair accessible vehicles in Australia. The service personalises the vehicle to the requirements of the individual, all with close consultation with the individual. Flash Cab will build the vehicle and arrange for it to be either collected or delivered to the purchaser; training for the individual in using the modified vehicle is included. Please read the handout and if there are any queries you can contact A&HS on 9655 5548.

5.5 Solar Keratosis information (handout)

A&HS have been sent information fact sheets on Solar Keratosis. Solar Keratosis is a common lesion, which occurs in sun-exposed skin. They are usually found on the face, back of the hands and forearms, and while non-cancerous, they can potentially lead to malignant skin cancers. Please read the handout and if there are any queries you can contact A&HS on 9655 5548.

6. Other Issues from the floor:

Article from TPI Pensioner Watsonia, prior to TPI was on 100% disability pension for 6 years – was not aware that Vic Roads offered a concession for those with 100% disability and gold card.

Vic Roads website shows:

Those on TPI or EDA (easily identified as noted on the gold card) and those on 100% disability pension (get letter from DVA showing that you are on 100% disability pension and take to Vic Roads), get free registration and 50% off TAC costs.

Advises that all other Gold Card Holders go to Vic Roads Office. If can satisfy the criteria, receive 50% off registration costs and 50% off TAC costs.

War widows can also get these discounts. However, will not get these benefits until your registration is due, ie if already paid this year will need to wait until next year.

7. Next Meeting: Wednesday 10th December 2008 at 1 pm.

The meeting closed at 2.50pm.

An Old Prospector

An old prospector walks his tired old mule into a western town one day. He'd been out in the desert for about six months without a drop of whiskey.

He walked up to the first saloon he came to and tied his old mule to the hitch rail. As he stood there brushing some of the dust from his face and clothes, a young gunslinger walked out of the saloon with a gun in one hand and a bottle of whiskey in the other.

The young gunslinger looked at the old man and laughed, saying, 'Hey old man, have you ever danced?'

The old man looked up at the gunslinger and said, 'No, I never did dance. I just never wanted to.'

A crowd had gathered by then and the gunslinger said, 'Well, you old fool, you're gonna' dance now,' and started shooting at the old man's feet. The old prospector was hopping around and everybody was laughing.

When the gunslinger fired his last bullet, he holstered his gun and turned around to go back into the saloon. The old man reached up on the mule, drew his shotgun, and pulled both hammers back making a double clicking sound. The gunslinger heard the sound and everything got quiet. The crowd watched as the gunslinger slowly turned around looking down both barrels of the shotgun.

The old man asked, 'Did you ever kiss a mule's ass?'

The gunslinger swallowed hard and said, 'No. But I've always wanted to.'

The two lessons from this story are:

1. Don't waste ammunition.
2. Don't mess with old people.

Honour the Dead ... but fight like hell for the living



Australian Government
Department of Veterans' Affairs

Changes to Eligibility for Partner Service Pension

Legislation regarding the changes to eligibility for the partner service pension (PSP) has now been passed by Parliament.

What Does This Mean?

- The changes will not be implemented until **1 July 2009**, NOT 1 January 2009 as previously advised.
- From 1 July 2009, eligibility for PSP for a separated spouse will be paid for a maximum of 12 months from the date of separation unless you have been assessed as a member of an illness separated couple or special domestic circumstances apply. In those cases, PSP will continue to be paid.
- Separated partners will have a full 12 month period from the date of their separation from the veteran to make alternative financial arrangements, unless they divorce or enter into a de facto relationship.
- Those who are Age Pension age at the end of the 12 month period will remain eligible for the partner service pension.
- As is the current situation, couples who are considered to be illness separated will continue to receive partner service pension.
- Partners in **special domestic circumstances** also retain the partner service pension. Special domestic circumstances are where the couple have separated and the veteran has a psychological or mental health condition recognised by the Department and there was an unsafe domestic environment for the partner and/or children prior to separation.
 - In order to establish whether special domestic circumstances apply, the partner (only) will be asked to complete a questionnaire. Where there is supporting information, this should be included and may include documents such as police reports or advice from medical practitioners.
- Please note that if the partner and veteran divorce or the partner enters into a de facto relationship with another person, the partner will lose eligibility and their payment will be cancelled. If the partner is the de facto partner of the veteran and they separate, they will lose eligibility for the partner service pension immediately. This is the current situation and has not been affected by this legislative change.
- The Department of Veterans' Affairs wrote to all affected partners on 4 December 2008, advising of the new changes to partner service pension.