



**AUSTRALIAN PEACEKEEPER & PEACEMAKER
VETERANS' ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL EXECUTIVE**

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*Commemorating 60 Years of Australian Peacekeeping
Operations*

Thursday, 24 January 2008

Subject: National President's Report – The Year that was and the Year to Come.

Hello All Readers,

Welcome to the APPVA "Peacekeeper" Magazine edition for Summer 2007/2008. This edition is the first one for the New Year of 2008. I hope that all of you managed to gain some well deserved rest and feel refreshed to start the New Year, whatever your occupied field.

A New Minister for Veterans' Affairs.

I would like to congratulate the new Minister of Veterans' Affairs, Mr Alan Griffin, MP, on his new appointment as our Minister and representative of the new Rudd Government. In saying this, I am looking forward to working with Alan in the same context when he was in Opposition and along the same close lines that we consulted with the previous Minister, Mr Bruce Billson. Alan was also instrumental on applying pressure (where needed) on a number of veteran issues in Opposition and we look forward to working with him during his term as the Minister for Veterans' Affairs.

Farewell Bruce Billson.

It would be remiss of me not to thank the substantial effort made by the previous Minister of Veterans' Affairs, Mr Bruce Billson. Bruce made a number of significant approaches toward veteran issues. He had the ability to identify where policy was letting some of our constituents down and went out of his way to either resolve the matters or fully support matters pertaining to our veteran base.

Bruce introduced a number of initiatives for the Health and Well-Being of current and ex-serving members. In August 2007, Bruce launched the "Whole of Government Approach" of the Integrated People Support Strategy (IPSS), which will be supported by the Departments of Defence and Veterans' Affairs. ESO will have an involvement in this Strategy. The APPVA intends to make a significant contribution toward the IPSS, with our APPVA National Younger Veteran Outreach Program expanding to meet the needs and pilot programs of the ADF.

"Looking After Our Own"

Bruce was instrumental, along with the National Advisory Committee (NAC), to change the name of the Vietnam Veteran Counselling Service (VVCS) to the Veteran and Veteran Families' Counselling Service, of which the acronym VVCS remains. Those of you who remember, the APPA/APPVA has lobbied for this name change since 2001. This is deemed as another victory. It took the intestinal fortitude of Bruce, amidst some minor protests to change the name. We are again truly thankful for this change.

In addition, Bruce launched the initiative of "OPERATION LIFE" in Melbourne on 10 September 2007. Bruce also launched the Veteran Family Intergenerational Effects Study in August 2007, which will culminate in the Centre of Military & Veteran Health research of the effects of Veteran's health on the veteran family and subsequent effects in the future. The first group will be Vietnam Veterans, with our Younger Veterans following thereafter.

Bruce Billson did a lot for the Veteran Community and he is commended by the APPVA for his drive and commitment toward our veteran issues.

The Year that was – 2007.

I would like to present the year that was for 2007. We had another busy year and as usual we attended the many Forums and Committees that are on the National arena for the Veteran Community. Along with the substantial initiatives launched by Bruce Billson, of which the APPVA was a participant, we had a number of substantial successes for 2007 and I raise these matters, along with our committed view toward 2008.

Increase to the Special Rate of Disability Pension.

I must also congratulate the ESOs who have been lobbying the Howard Government for a real increase with the Special Rate of Pension from the Veteran Entitlement Act (VEA). This pertains to those on Totally & Permanently Incapacitated (TPI); or Totally Temporarily Incapacitated (TTI); or Temporary Incapacity Allowance (TIA) pensions. The increase is around \$100, which the first \$50 increase was made in September 2007 and the second increase of approximately \$50 will be made 20 March 2008. This is a significant increase for our Younger Veterans and their families who have been doing it tough and who are unable to work and build wealth opportunities.

Increase to the Defence Service Homes Loan.

In August 2007, I also met the future Prime Minister of Australia, Kevin Rudd at Parliament House. I was in the company of the primary ESO National Presidents. The key issue that I raised with Kevin Rudd was the substantial erosion of the amount of the Defence Service Homes Loan (DSHL), which has not been changed since 1973 at \$25,000. Back in 1973, the amount of \$25,000 would have secured a good loan for the principle amount of a 3-bedroom brick veneer home. The amount of \$25,000 has remained, non-indexed for 34 years! A significant erosion of a veteran entitlement.

In today's terms, the amount of \$25,000 will not be able to pave your driveway! The DSHL should not be confused with the other Home Loans available in the ADF. The ADF Home Loan Scheme (ADFHLS) is only available up to 2 years from discharge, unless you are a Gulf War Veteran, where it is open-ended. The Defence Force Home Ownership Assistance Scheme (DFHOAS) is to be implemented 1 July 2008 to current serving members of the ADF only. The DFHOAS is the first real attempt by the Government to cover the amount for a house at around \$320,000, with a discounted interest.

However, veterans who hold eligibility for the DSHL, and those who do not hold any Home Loan entitlement, as a result of their service are at a great disadvantage. I made it quite clear to Kevin Rudd that there needs to be a real opportunity for our veterans to access a home loan scheme, with a significant discount in interest rates as a veteran entitlement, which is commensurate with the current Australian Median Home Price Index, which is around \$360,000 in today's terms. This is pertinent in today's climate of increasing housing demands and costs, including rising interest rates, which will make it very difficult for our veterans to obtain their own home.

This matter will continue to be raised by the APPVA, until we seek resolution for a fair and equitable veteran entitlement for our veterans.

Younger Veterans in Residential Care.

Pathways to care for Younger Veterans in Residential Care (YVIRC) came to a head last year from April to September 2007. A Gulf War Veteran, Bevan Taylor, who suffered from epilepsy as a result of operations to clear a Tumour on his brain, necessitated the APPVA to assist this 42 year old. The interesting fact was that DVA indicated that he should seek assistance of the Victorian State Government; however we viewed this as a Veteran health matter. He is a TPI veteran as a result of his Gulf War service and he deserved better.

This matter became interesting with inconsistent advice to the Minister, as to what was actually happening to the veteran. After some time of procrastination, a lead was made from a veteran in W.A. by providing the name of a Residential Health Company. This was followed-up and discovered that this was the ideal facility for Bevan to reside. The APPVA assisted Bevan's family by paying for his wife and son's removal from Northern NSW to Albury, so that they will be closer to Bevan.

In addition was the extraordinary assistance from Mick Quinn (APPVA National Entitlements Officer) and his lovely wife Fiona (APPVA Victorian Treasurer). Mick and Fiona welcomed Bevan into their home and made sure that he was safe. They drove him to his appointments and provided a great support to Bevan. Of particular mention is the Epilepsy Foundation, who housed Bevan when he was homeless and the support from Derryn Hinch of Melbourne's AM Radio 3AW. They did a fantastic job in helping a veteran in need.

The point of this exercise was that there was no feasible or appropriate accommodation that Bevan could move into. The RSL housing is for veterans aged 60 and above. Many other institutions and Facilities have the same restrictions, of which Younger People, let alone veterans are simply not able to have the care needed in a younger environment. In addition, it would cost Bevan up to \$440 per week to pay for his residential care. This was totally unsatisfactory as all of his TPI pension would have been used up and his family would be in financial trouble just on the Service Pension alone – this would be catastrophic if a younger veteran in a similar case does not have War Service Pension eligibility.

The outcome of this case is that the Secretary DVA made the right decision under the Defence Housing Act to have Bevan reside in the Sunny Cove Residential Care facility in Melton – just outside of Melbourne, of which he pays for his food. The DVA picks up the bill for his residence and his family are able to have some quality of life with the financial support that Bevan can provide them. We are hoping that this would be an effective Pathway to YVIRC for future veterans in similar circumstances.

The APPVA has since identified Pathways to YVIRC under the 3 Legislations with some probity issues remaining outstanding from the SRCA and Incapacity Payments. We will endeavour to seek further clarification this year and have these pathways imbedded into the DVA Health Care system for Younger Veterans.

The Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004 (MRCA).

Of particular note is the case of Major Mattina Stanfield. Matti has served in the Middle East Area of Operations (MEAO), Regional Assistance Mission in Solomon Islands (RAMSI), and lastly UNTSO (OP PALLADIN). Matti's case is an exceptional story of the Israeli/Lebanese war of 2006, of which she was right in the middle of. Her team site was completely destroyed by an Israeli bunker buster, killing 4 of her Team site mates. She was seriously injured when her APC fell into a bomb crater in Lebanon.

Under the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004 (MRCA), Matti will receive a lesser compensation amount than if she was injured in the same manner during warlike operations. This gives concern that this situation is a classic example of how the MRCA discriminates for age, sex and service. Basically it will reduce in value for males further than females; however the service type will also reduce the amount of compensation, along with the age of the veteran.

The APPVA has drafted a paper to the Minister for further consideration to resolve this discrimination and to allow real value in compensation, regardless of age, sex and service. In addition is our concern with the Special Rate of Disability Pension (SRDP), under s206 of the MRCA. The SRDP is an elected option for compensation and was meant to be a safety net as an outcome of the ESO Working Group, which APPVA was a member. However, somewhere between the Working Group and the Legislation, the SRDP will be reduced by 60% to that of the General Rate (The difference between 100% of the General Rate to the premium Special Rate), if the veteran is in receipt of a COMSUPER Pension. The result is the potential loss of around \$380 to the veteran.

The reason – apparently the bureaucrats believe that this is “double-dipping.” However closer examination of the Legislation will reveal that it is the Government that will be double dipping from the veteran in more ways than one. The War Service Pension (WSP) or the Disability Support Pension (DSP), will be means and assets tested on top of this disadvantageous approach. It is forcing veterans not to take the SRDP, which is in similar context to the VEA TPI with the ability to have DFRDB/MSBS on top of the amount, which is not reduced. There is a distinct disadvantage between young veterans on or after 1 July 2004, under MRCA, in comparison to veterans who are eligible under the VEA with COMSUPER.

We are also holding a concern that whilst our Police Overseas Veterans are currently eligible for the VEA, it would appear that they have as yet, to receive or be a part of beneficial veteran entitlement legislation. We would prefer to see that these Police Overseas Veterans (Mainly Peacekeepers), be included within the MRCA, in order to retain the beneficial approach by the Government toward Peacekeeping Service. These and other anomalies will be actively pursued by the APPVA in 2008.

National Younger Veteran Outreach Program.

I am delighted to say that the National Younger Veteran Outreach Program is progressing very well and the APPVA has been inundated with clients to assist in claims. We are very

thankful to the Government for providing funding toward a Full-Time Advocate in Melbourne (Mick Quinn – operating out of the Heidelberg Repatriation Veteran Centre); Full-time pension officer in Southern NSW (John Wyatt – operating out of the Albury RSL Sub-Branch); and our Part Time Administrative Support Officer – Mandy Wright, who is operating out of the Surf Coast Regional Veteran Centre in Torquay, Victoria. In addition, we have a Part Time Project Officer – Kirsten Simpson operating in Ocean Grove, Victoria.

The amount of claims being handled by our members is ever increasing. This is highlighted in the states of QLD; NSW; S.A; and Victoria. The Government is getting bang for its buck from our paid officers and volunteers. Currently, our officers are fielding clients from NT, W.A. and overseas on a range of matters within the three Legislative Acts (Safety Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988 (SRCA); VEA; and MRCA); along with providing vital information for veterans of COMSUPER (DFRDB/ MSBS).

We will soon be striking a number of Memorandums of Understanding, with some ESO, particularly in joint working environments in the delivery of quality service to our veterans, current and ex-serving members of the ADF, for entitlements and support. More on this matter at a later date.

Reclassification of Operations.

We saw the successful reclassification of the Australian Contingent to the Second United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR II) to warlike service in Feb 2006. Other areas have been some operations that required reclassification, such as OP HUSKY (Sierra Leone).

ATST-EM

The Army Training Support Team in East Timor (ATST-EM) has been lobbied by the APPVA for reclassification from Peacetime Service to Warlike Service. Bruce Billson supported the APPVA Ministerial Submission, which was collectively authored by Wayne McInnes and me. I am pleased to announce that the former PM, John Howard, signed a letter supporting the reclassification to Warlike Service and the retrospective Force assignment of ATST-EM to the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET), on 17 October 2007. This is a significant break-through for our lobbying campaign.

Having mentioned the above, it is clear that the incumbent Rudd Government is now requested to follow-up on this issue to ensure that retrospective Force assignment is agreed by the UN New York (Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO)). Once this has been obtained, along with the Instrument from the CDF of such reclassification to Warlike Service, then the matter will be official. At this point in time, I ask the veterans of ATST-EM to wait a little longer while the necessary processes have been completed, before approaching the Government in relation to this matter. The APPVA will certainly advise you in due course.

OP ASTUTE – Timor Leste

The APPVA is also focussed on the necessary reclassification of OPERATION ASTUTE, Timor Leste. We have reports from veterans of this operation, who also served with the International Force in East Timor (INTERFET), UNTAET and the UN Mission in Support of East Timor (UNMISSET), who claim that it is more dangerous on this Operation than those Operations previously mentioned.

To support this statement, it was interesting to note a comment from the Former Commander of JTF631, Brigadier Mick Slater who was quoted in the Australian Army Journal (AAJ Vol III, Number 2, Winter 2006), as a very difficult Operation in comparison to the beginnings of INTERFET, when he was the CO of 2RAR. The actors had a wide range of weapons, including the threat of sectarian and criminal violence and “Major” Reinado’s rebel force, and hostile, in comparison to the TNI and supporters in 1999.

Members have also reported the ongoing clashes on the streets, including threats from non-conventional weaponry, including swords, spears, blow darts to modern military weaponry. The APPVA feels that it was wrong for the Defence Minister Brendan Nelson to announce in Dili, on June 2006 that the service would be classified as Non-warlike. The APPVA continues to focus on this issue.

Other Operations

There have also been a number of break-throughs for Operations protecting our borders and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). These will be announced, hopefully by the Minister in some months ahead. The APPVA is also drafting another reclassification paper for the various wars that Australian UN Military Observers (UNMO) have been involved in the Middle East – namely the UN Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO) and the UN Military Observer Group India Pakistan (UNMOGIP) aka Kashmir. We are also researching the ADF Contingent to OP RAMP in Lebanon during the Israeli-Lebanese War of 2006. We invite any comment or material to assist us with a defined Submission.

Humanitarian/DACC Overseas Operations Reclassification.

We continue to lobby to have Humanitarian Overseas Service and/or Defence Aid to the Civil Community (DACC) Overseas Operations classified as Non-warlike service, in order to provide the Burden of Proof for these veterans to be under the “Reasonable Hypothesis.” This would allow a number of veterans of these operations to seek medical attention and claims, without having to resort to the scrutiny of the “Balance of Probabilities”, which is used for Peacetime Service within the VEA and MRCA Statement of Principles. We have veterans who have served on various DACC/Humanitarian Operations since 1986 to the present day, who have not been recognised for this service. It is our intention to maintain a focus on this issue.

Commemorating the 60th Anniversary of Australian Peacekeeping Operations.

We commemorated the 14th of September 2007, with the 60th Anniversary of Australian Peacekeeping Operations. The first Australian UNMO were deployed in the field on 14th September 1947, whilst serving under the auspices of the UN Committee of Good Offices (UNGOC – Later known as the UN Commission for Indonesia (UNCI)). The objective of the mission was to monitor the cease-fire between the Netherlands East Indies (Dutch East Indies) colonialists and the Indonesian nationals who were fighting for independence after the cessation of World War 2. They were not only the first Australian UNMO to deploy in the field, but arguably the world’s first Peacekeepers to deploy in the field.

Commemorative activities were conducted in Townsville, NQLD, with strong support from the Townsville City Council; Albury/Wodonga with the support of those City Councils and the community; in Melbourne at the Shrine of Remembrance; in Sydney at the Kings Park Cenotaph; in Hobart, Tasmania; and in Canberra with the 3-day 60th Anniversary of

Australian Peacekeeping Seminar. The latter was attended by our ACT APPVA representative, Graham Hayes; APPVA NSW President, Peter Matthey; APPVA National Vice President Gordon Traill; APPVA Member Gavin Lee; and I.

Suffice to say, we commemorated the occasion with as much vigour as we could muster. It is known that other states were unable to organise activities, due to illness and other reasons. At the Peacekeeping Seminar in Canberra, the Australian Peacekeeping Coin was launched by the Minister of Veterans' Affairs, Bruce Billson, who also opened the Seminar the following morning. I recommend that you obtain a 60th Anniversary Peacekeeping Coin, by contacting the Australian Mint Customer Service, any Australia Post outlet or the Australian War Memorial.

The Australian Peacekeeping Memorial Project Committee (APMPC), chaired by Major General Tim Ford AO (Retired), was successful in obtaining approval from the National Memorial Committee in Canberra, to have the Memorial situated on ANZAC Parade in Canberra. This is a significant victory, as previously, when the APPVA originally mooted the idea of a National Peacekeeper Memorial on ANZAC Parade in Canberra, it was met with opposition.

The site has now been allocated and it was officially opened in November 07. Being present for the launch of the site, I felt a great deal of pride as to how far we have advanced on the project, although some 3 years after concept and lobbying the then Minister for Veterans' Affairs Dana Vale. I am truly indebted to the APMPC for making this project a reality and congratulate Tim Ford on a fantastic job that he and his committee have done in realising a dream to come true.

I encourage all readers to become members of the APMPC, by visiting their website: <http://www.peacekeepingmemorial.org.au/> This is a worthwhile membership to be a part of building **our** National Memorial. Become a member and support the team with their dedication and hard-work. I also acknowledge the hard work of the following APPVA members who are members of the APMPC: Vice Chairman Matt Burke OAM; Secretariat Cleon Walters; Webmaster & IT Dave Vinen; and Assistant Treasurer Annie Noack.

New APPVA Branches.

It was with pleasure to note the emergence of a number of APPVA Branches during 2007. The APPVA Membership and organisation continues to grow at a healthy rate. In early 2007, the North QLD Branch, under the leadership of Lofty Evans was established in Townsville. Lofty has been a stalwart of the APPVA in the North and has done a fantastic job with his team.

It was a privilege to preside over the establishment of the APPVA ACT Branch in Canberra on the Anniversary of 60 years of Australian Peacekeeping Operations (14 Sep 2007). Lyndall Moore is the President, with Cleon Walters her Secretary and Annie Noack the Treasurer. This is a much needed gap filled in the ACT and I wish Lyndall and her team every success.

Lastly, I was again privileged to preside over the meeting that established the South Queensland Branch at the Goodna RSL Sub-Branch on 5 November 2007. Alongside me at this meeting was the APPVA Patron, Major General John Pearn (Retired), who was delighted with the outcome. The meeting was well attended with Andrew Reggett elected President, Warren Ball his Vice, his wife Donna the Secretary and Marcus Bruty the Treasurer. Up to 6

other committee members were additionally elected and I am impressed with the enthusiasm that is generating out of the SQLD Branch.

We have now identified some people in W.A. to get the APPVA moving in the West. I am hopeful that they will be established in time for ANZAC Day, so that they are able to proudly march the streets of Perth as their own entity. I look forward to working further with David Lee.

In Tasmania, Phil Pyke has been doing a good job in representing the APPVA, although he has been ill for some time. In addition, Phil has now deployed to OP ASTUTE in Timor Leste for 4 months, so things may be quiet on the Apple Isle until his return in April 08. We wish Phil a safe and rewarding tour of duty.

The APPVA now has covered the majority of Australia, with Branches established in the ACT; NQLD; NSW; NT; S.A; SQLD; and VIC.

Medals.

The issue of medals remains of significance to our membership and constituents. Recently I met with the Defence Honours & Awards (DHA) Review Committee toward Commendations and Awards for Defence. It was suggested by a member of the DHA Review Committee, that a "one in all in" approach is made toward the awarding of medals for military members of the ADF and Defence Civilians. Apparently, this has been endorsed by a number of senior officers.

After hearing of this and stating that this would not go down well with the troops, particularly during ANZAC Days, I approached a number of current serving members, who gave the response that I expected. Everyone, from current to ex-serving members that I have spoken with since late November have completely rejected this approach. They feel that their service recognition will be diminished and are disgusted at the suggestion.

It is our view that Defence Civilians have a unique awards system, separate from those who serve in uniform. This matter will be presented to the Review Committee in a Submission that is due in early February 2008.

Notwithstanding the above, the matter of equal recognition to those who have served before us and those on current operations needs to be addressed.

Operational Medals need to be made toward those ADF members who have served on Warlike operations from UNTAG (Namibia); Gulf War I; Cambodia; Somalia; Rwanda; and East Timor (post INTERFET). This is suggested to be only available to those ADF members who have served on Warlike service and will compliment their AASM.

The proposal that a unique medal is struck for the specific recognition of Peacekeeping is also an ongoing matter. The UN Police Association of Australia (UNPAA) National President Denis Percy and I have agreed in principle that the issue of the proposed Australian Peacekeeping Medal be made available to ADF and Police Service members **only**. That this medal signifies the special, arduous and demanding environment of serving in a Non-warlike Peacekeeping Operation.

This Peacekeeping recognition will be separate to those who served on warlike Operations as for above, of which only one will be awarded with the ASM. The proposal is for the Warlike

service PKO to be awarded the Operational Medal to the particular Operation and is therefore not entitled to the Australian PK medal, unless a member has served on another Non-warlike PKO.

The other anomalies that continue to exist is the retrospective recognition of awarding the AASM to RAAF Crews who supported UNTAG Namibia; RAN Crews who supported Somalia; and those who were on short term service to a given warlike service (East Timor is one of these operations).

That the ASM is awarded retrospectively to those 152 veterans of the Commonwealth Monitoring Force in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe); South Pacific Peacekeeping Force (SPPKF Bougainville) and various Special Operations – not pertaining to the SASR or Submarines.

Female Veteran Re-integration Study.

The Female Veteran Re-integration Study is now completed and we await the publishing of the results of the study from the Victorian University. The APPVA provided significant support toward the study and we are looking forward to the outcomes of this study.

Senate Hearing Committee – Australia’s Involvement in Peacekeeping Operations.

I attended the Senate Hearing Committee for Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade (FADT), to Australia’s Involvement in Peacekeeping Operations on 21st August 2007 in Melbourne. The APPVA paper is available on the link:

http://www.aph.gov.au/SENATE/COMMITTEE/fadt_ctte/peacekeeping/submissions/sub16.pdf

Along with our submission, there was a number of other submissions that may be of interest to our members. I highlight one from Wayne McInnes who has championed the ATST-EM reclassification cause.

To view the transcripts, submissions and reports, please visit the FADT website:

http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/Committee/fadt_ctte/peacekeeping/index.htm

APPVA Website www.peacekeepers.asn.au

The APPVA Website has undergone significant changes in the past 12 months. Dave Vinen, our IT Manager is very busy writing code, adding new pages, ensuring that we are able to have a choice of payment options on the website and to also catalogue and conduct Configuration Management of the APPVA IT resources.

We will be introducing a new telecommunications system by installing Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) to our Key Appointments and Practitioners. This will be effective around June 2008, with further expansion of the VOIP network across Australia. We will also have a 1300 or 1800 number for national access, with voice messaging facilities etc. It is envisaged that this system will cut at least 48% of our phone bills.

The Website, once the final stages of the rebuild are completed, will be a new, refreshing look, with a number of new features available to the public and to our members.

In summary – **the year that was** for the APPVA was a significant year, with a number of

successful outcomes to our lobbying; the quality delivery of veteran entitlement assistance and support to our constituency; the ongoing consultation with Government, in particular with the ADF, DVA, the Centre of Military and Veteran Health (CMVH); and the increase of membership and Branches of the APPVA. The APPVA continues to gain credibility in a range of forums and has indeed built a reputation as the focal and Primary ESO for veterans Post 1975 of War, Conflicts, Peacekeeping Operations, Humanitarian/DACC Operations, EEZ Operations; Police Overseas Service and ADF Peacetime Service.

APPVA Forum & AGM – Sydney 1-3 Feb 08.

At the time of writing, the National Executive is preparing for the APPVA National AGM and Forum to be held at RAAF Richmond, near Sydney NSW, during the period 1-3 Feb 2008. We will have a number of VIPs attending, including: the new Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin; the Shadow Spokeswoman for Veterans' Affairs, Bronwyn Bishop; representing the Chief of the Defence Force (CDF) – Major General Mick Slater (DSC, AM, CSC) who is Head Defence Personnel Executive (HDPE); Major General Bill Crews AO (retired) National President of the RSL; Ron Coxon OAM National President of VVAA; and a number of ESO and their representatives.

The APPVA has had a very productive year in 2007. There have been many achievements made and we are geared up, or shall I say on the ground running again in the New Year for 2008. This year promises to be an interesting year, given that we have had a change of Government, with new Policy to be implemented. The APPVA will closely consult with the Minister, Alan Griffin, into how these policies will be implemented and ensure that the best possible outcome is made toward our constituency.

I look forward to 2008 as the President of the APPVA, of which I am up for election on 3 Feb 08. I am optimistic that I will be completing yet another and final term, which will conclude in early 2010. It has been a true honour to be your National President, and I look forward to another term (if elected). There are many issues that require resolution and I am confident that we will be successful in these endeavours.

APPVA Response to the ALP Veterans' Policy Paper.

After much consultation with the Executives and Practitioners of the APPVA, a paper has been drafted for the Minister Alan Griffin, to consider our points in relation to the ALP Veteran Policy Paper. The APPVA basically accepts most of the issues raised; however there is a concern with the auditing and public accountability of individual practitioners under the Building Excellence in Support and Training (BEST) Funding Program. Whilst the Paid Practitioners of the APPVA have no problem with this, it is viewed by volunteers as an intrusive proposal into their activities, of which we risk losing these volunteers from such Government or Non-Government scrutiny.

We accept that there are ESO across Australia that receive BEST Funds, and that they may not necessarily expend this money appropriately toward the provision of services in Veteran entitlements and support to constituent veterans. However, the current reporting mechanisms, which is quarterly within the APPVA is deemed sufficient in the reporting to the Department. The APPVA is fully accountable for every dollar spent, the hours worked by our practitioners, the productivity and throughput is perhaps under-reported than what we should be reporting; regular audited accounts and a professional approach toward the expenditure of the funds has been our strength.

As we further develop the APPVA National Younger Veteran Outreach Program, it is evident that we need to cater for the increasing workload on our practitioners, as the volunteer resource dissipates. The Program will be supportive to all veterans and in particular the IPSS for current and ex-serving members of the ADF.

Last but not least.

Lastly, the most important component of the APPVA is its members. Membership is integral to our success and support. Without it, we will not survive as a viable entity in the Veteran Community. Please, actively recruit where you can to increase our membership, and if people feel that they want to be a contributing member, I encourage you to contact your respective Branch.

Have a Safe, Prosperous and successful 2008.

Yours Sincerely,

P.A. Copeland,
National President.