



AUSTRALIAN PEACEKEEPER & PEACEMAKER
VETERANS' ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL EXECUTIVE
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*The National Veteran Mental Health &
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*The National Younger Veteran
Consultative Forum*

*The New Military Compensation ESO
Working Group*

*The Veterans' Medicines Advice and
Therapeutic Education Services*

*The Stakeholder Advisory Group to the
INTERFET Vet's Study*

*The National Treatment Monitoring
Committee*

*Female Veterans' Reintegration
Research Project*

Listed Ex-Service Organisation with the Department of Veterans' Affairs ESO Directory

Monday, 12 February 2007

Subject: National President's Report – AGM 3 Feb 2007

The Past 12 Months (2006).

1. National Forums. In 2006, the APPVA continually represented its members and constituents on a large number of National Forums. The presence of the APPVA on these forums continues to make a significant impact in representation of the issues of our members and constituents. A number of issues have been raised at these forums and have either been resolved or have been placed into strategic planning for DVA. The following is a list of the National Forums attended, along with the representative's name from the APPVA:

The National Younger Veteran Consultative Forum (NYVCF). This is chaired by the Repatriation Commissioner who is also the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commissioner (MRCC). The Forum meets between 3-4 times per year. From 2003-2006, Paul Copeland was the representative on this forum until his acceptance to represent the APPVA at the National Treatment Monitoring Committee for Veterans and War Widows(ers) (NATMOC). Gordon Traill was recently appointed by the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Bruce Billson to officially represent the APPVA at the NYVCF.

The National Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Forum (NVMHWF). This is chaired by the National RSL President, MAJGEN Bill Crews. The Forum is seeking ESO input into improving the mental health and wellbeing of veterans. There have been a number of outcomes from this forum and they are available on the web. The site to visit is: <http://www.dva.gov.au/health/mhealth/nvmhfwf.htm> The NVMHWF is represented by the National Presidents of the peak ESO, of which Paul Copeland has been appointed by the Minister of Veterans' Affairs to represent the APPVA, since 2005.

"Looking After Our Own"

The Centre of Military and Veteran Health (CMVH). The CMVH is headed by Prof. Niki Ellis. Niki has been a long time friend of the APPVA and has consulted with the APPVA on many occasions. Recently, Rod Kirkman of Brisbane was the APPVA representative on the East Timor Study. The Solomon Islands is the next group to undergo studies of which the APPVA will be seeking a representative to attend the Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG). Ideally the representative would have served in the Solomon Islands and resides in Brisbane. If any APPVA member feels that she/he would like to attend, please advise the National President ASAP. Lastly, the CMVH has invited the National President to a number of Working Groups and more recently the CMVH Think Tank into Medical Ethics of current serving ADF members. The APPVA enjoys an excellent relationship with the CMVH and it has also been highlighted by the ADF stakeholders that the APPVA is having a significant input with quality consultation into these working groups.

The National Treatment Monitoring Committee for Veterans and War Widows(ers) (NATMOC). The National President was given Ministerial appointment to represent the APPVA on this Committee in late 2005. NATMOC meets in areas that hold large numbers of veterans and widows in the regional parts of Australia, rather than the capital cities. NATMOC meets between 2-3 times per year. Last year NATMOC met in Ballina NSW, Launceston TAS and Victor Harbour S.A. The next meeting is to be held in Busselton/Dunsborough W.A between 27-30 March 2007. NATMOC is a forum where the committee gains input from the ESO, along with the local ESO and veterans of the region visited. It is also the forum for APPVA to raise any issues that relate to the treatment of our members and constituents and seek either resolution and/or improvement to the treatment system.

The Ex-Service Organisation Working Group (ESO WG) – Defence Links Project. This Project is an ongoing project and primarily aims to improve the Transitional Management Service (TMS) for current serving ADF members, along with improvements to the Medical Discharge Process. The Links Project is also inclusive of obtaining data from the ADF to DVA in order to provide “real-time” access to ADF medical records, in order to increase the Time Taken To Process (TTTP) Claims of various Acts. The ESO WG met mid 2006, and was represented by the AVADSC; VVF (Mal Wheat); RSL (John Printz); Victorian Training Consultative Group (TCG) – Steve Hunter (an APPVA member); VVAA (Ron Coxon); and APPVA (Paul Copeland). The outcome of this ESO WG was to have the ADF member “Ready for Discharge”. This was so that the ADF would allow adequate time for rehabilitation, resettlement, Career Transition, re-training, finalisation of claims – prior to discharge. This has been an area that was identified by the APPVA a number of years ago and I am pleased to report that this appears to shortly be a reality. The main emphasis is to provide a stress-free and seamless transition from the ADF to Civvie Street.

The Government Budget Briefings. Every year in around May, the Minister of Veterans’ Affairs invites Peak ESOs to attend a Government Budget Briefing in Canberra. The Briefing to the ESOs concentrates on the outcomes of the Budget for Veterans. This briefing is normally attended by all National Presidents of Peak ESO, of which APPVA is represented by Paul Copeland.

Australian Peacekeeping Memorial Project Committee (APMPC), The APPVA is strongly represented on this Committee. Originally, in March 2004, a delegation of APPVA members (Bob Kennard (then Nat Sec); Lofty Evans (NQLD POC); and Paul Copeland (Nat Pres), visited the then Minister for Veterans’ Affairs Danna Vale, MP. The main outcome of

the meeting was to secure funding for a National Peacekeeping Memorial in Canberra. It was suggested to have this Memorial in the gardens of the Australian War Memorial (AWM), however the delegation reinforced the notion of having the Peacekeeping Memorial on ANZAC Parade, alongside our fore-fathers. Since then, as a result of the 2004 Election Promise, the Government committed \$200,000 toward the project as a result of this visit along with a number of other areas of historical value within the AWM of PK/PM. It was interesting to note that the ALP offered the APPVA \$1M, as they believed that we shouldn't have to fund raise such a project.

In early 2005, the inaugural meeting of a committee to project manage the memorial was instigated by the APPVA at RSL National HQ in Canberra. In attendance was MAJGEN Tim Ford AO (Retired). Tim was nominated as the chair and he accepted this position. Since then, the APMPC has grown and has done a fantastic job in negotiating with Government departments. Under the leadership of MAJGEN Ford, all Three Service Chiefs, the Chief of Defence Force (ACM Angus Houston AO, AFC), and the Federal Police Commissioner Mick Keelty APM, have unequivocally supported this project. The National Capital Authority has also endorsed the site for the memorial to be on ANZAC Parade.

Matt Burke OAM (APMPC Vice President) has been very active in this committee and certainly has worked hard to achieve many outcomes, along with other APPVA members (Peter Matthey NSW; David Vinen NSW; and Paul Copeland Nat Pres). Further details and progress of this valuable project is on the website: <http://peacekeepingmemorial.org.au/>

Do yourself a favour and visit this website and become a member of the APMPC, in order to assist in fund raising. This is pertinent now more than ever, as we enter the 60th year of Australian Peacekeeping. Please support this project.

The National Advisory Council (NAC). The NAC is chaired by Brian McKenzie OAM, and reports directly to the Minister of Veterans' Affairs. The NAC visits major capitals and listens to the views of veterans and ESO in relation to the treatment and services of the Vietnam Veterans' Counselling Service (VVCS). The APPVA representative on this Council is Marty Carr (Pres QLD). It is envisaged that the name of the VVCS will be changed to the Veterans' Counselling Service (VCS), with due homage to the Vietnam veterans who established this valuable service. This has been on the APPVA agenda since early 2001.

Defence Service Homes Insurance Working Group. Defence Service Homes Insurance (DSHI), was at one stage being considered for outsourcing from DVA. Concerns within the Veteran community was that the once very competitive Insurance, which is subsidised by DVA, would be outsourced and the special savings of the Insurance scheme would be lost as a veteran entitlement. John Wyatt (APPVA S.A.), attended this Working Group, representing APPVA. The DSHI is still hanging in the balance, however John's fervour has indicated that the reason that there is a low participation level from veterans is because it is not advertised adequately to current and ex-serving ADF members and Younger Veterans. This has been taken on board by the Department and we wait a final decision to see if it is retained. Let's hope it remains, or it will be yet another Veteran Entitlement that has been eroded as an economic victim.

2. Veteran Indemnity Training Association (VITA). On the 26th of October 2006, the APPVA was accepted as a member of VITA. VITA provides indemnity insurance to our Building Excellence in Support and Training (BEST) Practitioners. APPVA has had a significant growth in BEST Practitioners in the past 2 years, and it was decided by the

National Executive to seek VITA membership. The reason for this is to cover our BEST Practitioners across Australia. This has become apparent, particularly when we are now embarking on the National Younger Veteran Outreach Program. Paid Full time and Part Time Staff are being planned to be employed to provide a specialist service to current and ex-serving members of the ADF and Police forces.

They will have qualifications and experience in the Safety Rehabilitation & Compensation Act 1988 (SRCA); Military Compensation Scheme (Defence Act 1901); The Veteran Entitlement Act 1986 (VEA); The Military Compensation & Rehabilitation Act 2004 (MRCA); The various Commonwealth Employees Acts and COMSUPER. Inclusive of this arsenal of experience will be the knowledge of current ADF discharge procedures, along with an understanding of the Career Transition Assistance Scheme (CTAS). Hence the selected members will be considered as the subject matter experts in the wide range of entitlement and compensation Acts, as well as the impact of COMSUPER and CTAS. This is so the ADF member is assisted in making educated decisions in their choices for their future and to provide them with the information to move on into a seamless discharge into civilian street.

3. Involvement in TIP/BEST. The APPVA is increasingly being involved with the Training Information Program (TIP) and BEST. TIP is essentially separated from BEST, which provides training to prospective BEST Practitioners. Currently, the APPVA has four members that are involved with TIP. Wayne Alexander (Vice Chair) in S.A.; Steve Hunter in Vic; Peter Matthey in NSW; and Paul Copeland in Vic. Mick Quinn, who is our Full time Pensions Officer has also been involved in a workshop to devise the next levels of MRCA training in Victoria. This is considered a significant step forward for the APPVA, as we become further involved with the technical and training aspects of the many legislative acts that our members are eligible.

4. The National Younger Veteran Outreach Program. This APPVA initiative has been highly successful, with a pilot program being conducted in Victoria. Mick Quinn has become our first full time Pensions Officer, of which his clientele has been building at a rapid rate. The Program will embark to cover all states, however this will take some degree of time, given Government resources. The requirement or demand is certainly apparent, and it is up to the APPVA to take the lead on multi-eligibility for current and ex-serving members of the ADF. Whilst we have endured a set-back with the Regional Veteran Centre Project (RVCP) in Victoria, who effectively black-banned Mick from operating out of the APPVA established Heidelberg Repatriation Veteran Centre (HRVC), this has not prevented the progress of the Program.

Plans are now set for increasing services to ADF members and Younger Veterans in Townsville; Brisbane; and Sydney. These services will be conducted by Part Time Pensions Officers, selected by the National Executive. Should anyone be interested in applying for these positions, please contact the National President ASAP.

5. RSL Victorian Younger Veteran Forum. In August 2006, the RSL Victoria Branch instigated a Younger Veteran Forum. The forum is chaired by Anne Pahl, State Council member. Anne is a current serving RANR, and is heavily involved with the RSL in Victoria. She is a Younger Veteran, who served on HMAS JERVIS BAY, during OPERATION SOLACE in Somalia. Members of this forum included 2 members from the 3 services. The 2 members are WO (WO2, CPO or WOFF) equivalent or CAPT (FLTLT, or LEUT). In addition is representatives from TPI Association Victoria, Legacy, Naval Association, and 3 members from the APPVA – Mick Quinn; Gordon Traill (Nat VP); and Paul Copeland.

This forum is considered a National First, of which it will report to the National body of the RSL in order to identify Younger Veteran issues and provide support to these issues. It is the intention that Younger Veterans' issues begin to be placed in the forefront of the national agenda to DVA and the Minister. The forum met twice in 2006, and will continue meeting in 2007, with identified outcomes to be determined by the forum.

6. Establishment of APPVA Branches. I am very pleased to announce that the APPVA established 4 new branches in 2006. I was privileged to open the S.A. Branch in Dec 06, with Wayne Alexander the State President. The NSW Branch is now officially a functional branch under the leadership of Peter Matthey. In North Queensland, Lofty Evans has worked hard to establish the North Queensland Branch, with their inaugural meeting in late Nov. Each of these APPVA Branches are now Incorporated within their own state; have an ABN and are operational. APPVA Victorian Branch has also recently become a separate identity in their own right, under the leadership of Matt Burke, OAM and his hard working team.

By having APPVA Branches Incorporated in the respective State/Territory, it allows DVA to provide Grant funding directly to the Branch concerned. It also allows for accountability to the respective Office of Fair Trading/Consumer Affairs. The accountability aspect is very important for APPVA to prove that it is capable to conduct itself within the Incorporations Act and be lawfully acknowledged as a business entity. All Incorporated Branches hold their own Australian Business Numbers (ABN) and are also accountable to the Australian Taxation Office (ATO).

With the Incorporation and ABN registration as a "Not-for-profit" organisation, the APPVA is able to provide assurance to its members that we are serious about the way we conduct our business and that we are bound by law to be accountable.

I await with enthusiasm for Queensland to become effectively operational in the same manner as the 4 State Branches, who took the initiative to become accountable.

Tasmania has become very slow to progress, and this is due to the illness of 2 of our key players in that state. It is unfortunate that we have had a temporary pause of progress in Tassie, however I am optimistic that it will pick up in 2007.

W.A. is perhaps an area of concern. There is a large population of Younger Veterans who reside in the West and it has been reported by Mick Gledhill and Philip Steele that it has been difficult establishing the APPVA in the West. Don't give up fellas – keep going and it will fall into place. You will find the right people and you will be glad that you kept going. We need you over there to keep the APPVA flag flying and get the network thriving for our Younger Vets.

7. APPVA Website Development. The APPVA website has seen significant development in 2006. Members and visitors will attest to the professional standard of our website and I would like to thank David Vinen for his tireless efforts in developing our website. There is plenty of work left for Dave unfortunately, however under the DVA Grant-in-Aid, we have managed to secure funding for a quality website.

8. Membership. The APPVA membership has significantly increased under the hard work being performed by our National Membership Secretary – Mrs Shona Traill. Shona has managed to retrieve a large number of members who have not been financial since 2002/03. In addition, our membership numbers have increased by 45% over the period since May 2006.

Membership is the backbone of the APPVA. We need to continually nurture our membership, along with continual recruiting strategies. One of these strategies would be ideally for each member to seek a potential eligible member and have them join. By doing so, we will easily double our numbers for the end of 2007.

Remember by being a member, you are not obliged to spend time with us, in your busy lives. By becoming a member, you are helping us to help others. Your individual membership also provides us with the numbers to provide us with political clout if and when needed. We may be reasonably young, but we are providing quality advice to the Minister and the ADF. Your support by being a member encourages us to continue with “righting the wrongs”.

9. Membership Database Improvements. The Membership Database has now been developed further to make the records user friendly and also improvements made to the emailing addresses. This has been as a result of a significant amount of time spent by Shona in rectifying a number of typo errors and addressing errors. Now that these problems have been rectified, we can expect a far better and accurate record of our members.

All State Branch Secretaries will be updated with membership data as time permits. For these secretaries, please use this data to contact members in your respective states and maintain communications with them, advising them of your meetings and activities. The ball is now in your court.

10. Reclassification of Service – OP TAMAR (UNAMIR II – Rwanda). Less obvious in this report is the significant milestone in the APPVA’s history. The APPVA had for some time, lobbied Government to have the reclassification of service changed for those 638 men and women of the ADF who served in the tragedy of Rwanda. It was the APPVA’s continual aim to ensure that Qualifying Service for the War Service Pension (WSP) was a key tangible benefit to these veterans, many of whom are Totally and Permanently Incapacitated (TPI), as result of the horrific experiences during their service in Rwanda. The APPVA was contacted by the Channel 9 “Sunday Program” and the Bulletin, of which we were able to tell a story of horror that many Australians would never have known.

Our veterans of Rwanda deserved better recognition for this service, and with lobbying to the ADF, Opposition Spokesman for VA (Alan Griffin), and the new incumbent Minister of Veterans’ Affairs (Bruce Billson), we were able to successfully have all three parties agree on the case for reclassification for those who served in Rwanda.

In mid-Feb 06, this change was enacted by Parliament and I am happy to say that a number of Rwandan veterans contacted this association with high praise and genuine thanks. They were entitled to the WSP, which made a significant difference to their quality of life. At age 70, any Rwanda veteran, like those who have served on warlike service, will be entitled to a Gold Card. At age 60, any Rwandan veteran will now be eligible for WSP and retire 5 years earlier than the average Australian. Those in receipt of TPI (Special Rate), will automatically be entitled to WSP (Conditions are observed with income offsetting), and any Rwandan veteran will be entitled to the WSP if they are unable to work more than 8 hours per week due to a non-service related illness or injury.

11. Submissions. The quality of submissions that have been lodged by the APPVA have been noted by the Minister of Veterans’ Affairs are of high quality. The Minister has consistently stated that the APPVA provides quality consultation in getting a point across in support of veteran issues. A number of Ministerial Submissions and letters were sent last year, perhaps importantly is the Reclassification of the Army Training Support Team – East Timor (ATST-EM). Whilst this issue remains unresolved at this point in time, it is

acknowledged as having a plausible and logical argument to support the ATST-EM veterans for reclassification of service to match all ADF members deployed to East Timor at the time to Active Service.

Our Submissions will continue to be of high quality, given well researched and factual information.

12. RSL National Remits. I was appointed a Delegate of the Torquay RSL Sub-Branch at the Victorian State Conference in June last year. At the Torquay AGM in March 06, I placed 3 remits for voting. They were: The Reclassification of ATST-EM to Warlike Service; Peacekeeping Memorial to be on ANZAC Parade in Canberra; and a Post 1975 Medal entitlement Review. All 3 remits were unanimously voted by the TRSL membership.

At the Victorian Conference all 3 remits were unanimously accepted. As a consequence these remits were raised at the National Congress of the RSL in Perth in September 2006. All 3 remits were accepted and are now on the RSL National Agenda. This is considered a major outcome for the APPVA, as we continue to lobby through a bilateral working relationship with the RSL and other ESO.

13. Accounts transcribed to MYOB. With great thanks to Jacqui Henry, the National Treasurer, all APPVA National Accounts have now been successfully transcribed onto Mind your own business (MYOB) Accounting software. This will enable the National Executive fast financial reporting and overview of the APPVA's finances. It will also enable better and easy management of Government funding.

14. APPVA Sub-Branches. In 2006, it is noted that there is a desire by 2 bodies to have their own APPVA Sub-Branches. One of those is in Ballarat Victoria (Danny Blomley and company); and also with the 1st Parachute Surgical Team (1PST) in NSW. The APPVA encourages those members who wish to establish APPVA Sub-Branches, as this is the further development of the APPVA. Ballarat is intending to be a Sub-Branch of the Victorian Branch some time in the future and 1PST has already approached NSW President Peter Matthey and will be marching behind the APPVA banner.

15. 60th Anniversary of Australian Peacekeeping. As we are now entering the 60th year of Australian Peacekeeping (14 Sep 1947), I was fortunate to contact and visit James Rogers of the DVA Commemorations Section. At a meeting in March 06, I was able to secure a degree of funding and a commemorative calendar for 2007. The Calendars are now available. Please seek your calendar from your DVA State Office, or Regional Veteran Area Network (VAN).

We will discuss the 60th Anniversary of Australian Peacekeeping in detail at the National AGM.

16. Vietnam Veteran Federation. It has been detected through sources on the internet that the VVF were planning on taking on the name of the Peacekeepers & Peacemakers. This was highly objected to the VVF in writing and with Wayne Alexander presenting at the VVF National Congress in Adelaide in late November 06. For those who may be unaware, the APPVA has Intellectual Property (IP) rights to our name in part or whole for any organisation. We highlighted this to the VVF, that there will be legal ramifications if they took on our name.

On 13 Dec 06, the National VP (Gordon Traill); NSW State Pres (Peter Matthey); and I, visited the VVF at Granville in Sydney. We put out case to them in relation to this name

change. It would appear that the VVF in Sydney have a very good clientele with ADF members, particularly in Holsworthy Barracks. We stated that this should not be the reason for a name change and that it would be divisive in the Veteran community if this naming should go ahead. It was agreed that we will develop a bilateral working relationship with the VVF in Sydney. Simply put, the VVF want the APPVA to utilise their facilities that they have worked very hard to establish. We are more than happy to work together in this manner. However, we are to await confirmation of this arrangement from the VVF, after an AGM in 2007.

17. Rehabilitation and Retention in the ADF. During 2006, I have had the opportunity to talk informally to the Director General of Defence Health Services (DG DHS) Air Marshall Tony Austin; and the Surgeon General ADF (SGADF), Rear Admiral Graeme Shirtley RFD RANR. Inclusive of this is the mentioning and having the issue recognised at the NVMHWF. The aim is to have the ADF to retain their medically downgraded members as much as possible. An idea is that those who are severely injured/wounded/ill may wish to opt for Part Time Service in the Reserve Forces. This concept has been met with interest from both the DG DHS and the Minister of Veterans' Affairs. The Minister has also taken this option to the CDF, which appears to have been warmly received.

As for the Defence Links ESO WG, it would be prudent of the ADF to retain skilled members in order to retain those skills and corporate knowledge in a competitive workforce and to also add to the capability of the combat force or fighting arms of the ADF. These members may not necessarily deploy, but provide vital support in the form of Administration, Training & Development, Project Management and Force Development.

It is felt that if this Part Time option was available to members, that self-esteem would be retained for the individual, along with the reduction of stress during the transient period. Serving the nation is considered a highly noble profession, and it would enable the force to be further enhanced with these members being retained. I look forward to further development in this area.

17a. Churchill Fellowship Study of International Veteran Organisations. In early 2005, the then National Vice President, Mr John Coyne, was successful in applying for a Churchill Fellowship Grant. The Grant was to provide John with financial assistance in visiting the USA, Canada and UK. John visited these countries in 2006 and has almost completed his paper on Younger Veteran organisations, health care, peer support, entitlements and the way that Governments care for their Young Veterans from various conflicts. It is an analytical paper making comparisons with how Australian Younger Veterans are cared to our Allied veterans.

John's paper will soon be released. It is intended that John will present this paper to the NVMHWF in Canberra, perhaps in March 2007.

Future Intentions for 2007.

18. APPVA National Executive Constitution. I will be asking this afternoon for some significant changes to be made to the APPVA Constitution. The structure will be of the National Executive; a Committee of Management and non-established Branches. I will be asking that Proxy Voting be abolished. Defence Service or Peacetime ADF members will be eligible to become Ordinary Members. Affiliate members may also become voting members if they hold a Key Appointment within a given Committee of Management. This is in order to

make the APPVA National Executive Constitution an easy to read document and that the procedures are simplified. The changes of the Constitution will be checked by Consumer Affairs Victoria.

In addition to the changes, will be the opportunity for the APPVA National Executive, who are Incorporated in Victoria, to access the ANZAC Day Proceeds Funds and the Victorian Veteran Council Grants. This will provide some funding toward our activities and allow us to provide quality support to our constituency.

One of the more significant outcomes will be the opportunity to seek State Government of Victoria endorsement as a Charitable Organisation for the purposes of Tax-Deductibility. This Tax-Deductibility will provide potential sponsors and supporters of the APPVA to donate money with tax deductibility over any \$2 donated. It will also provide the APPVA with further flexibility and increase our ability to service our constituents.

19. Consultation. The APPVA will continue with quality consultation with the Minister of Veterans' Affairs, the Opposition Spokesman, the ADF and other Government Departments. Consultation is also in the participation of the many forums that we currently hold positions.

The APPVA has now been invited to participate with the Operational Working Party, which is sponsored by DVA. We are seeking to have two experienced members on this important Working Party, which will seek Legislative and procedural changes to the SRCA, MRCA, MCRS & VEA.

20. Technology Development. The APPVA will lead the veteran community as a technologically advanced ESO, utilising Information Technology and Communications. It is intended to implement a National 1 300 dialling service for our constituency and utilise Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP). This has several advantages. Firstly, the 1 300 number will be the only number used to contact APPVA and will save a great deal of confusion and contact problems, with the varying contact numbers. Secondly, is the savings that will be impacted on the APPVA by utilising VOIP technology. VOIP to VOIP on a common system costs nothing. VOIP to dialled outside numbers across Australia will be significantly cheaper than the current STD or long distance rates experienced. VOIP to mobile will also reduce costs. The problem therefore will be with the Mobile phones, of which we will look at further technologies and savings plans to reduce costs.

Furthermore, the National IT Manager (Dave Vinen), will be conducting Configuration Management of all IT Hardware and Software. I have directed that Dave commences development of a Standard Operating Environment (SOE), so that all software used by Key Stakeholders and Practitioners are of the same version, with the opportunity to acquire Corporate Licensing for Software used by the APPVA. Again, this will provide interoperability between ourselves and provide savings on software packages.

21. 60th Anniversary of Australian Peacekeeping. I ask all members to now consider how they wish to commemorate the 60th Anniversary of Australian Peacekeeping. On 14th September 2007, it will be 60 years that the world's first peacekeepers, four Australian Officers, deployed to the field in Indonesia under the auspices of the UN Commission for Indonesia (UNCI). This is a significant milestone in our military and public history.

Australia has contributed ADF and Police members to Peacekeeping Operations non-stop for 60 years. This is a significant achievement that should not go unrecognised. Recently Peacekeeping operations have included warlike service on various operations, and has also

included Customs and Quarantine officers and other Government organisations. Simply put, the dynamics of Peace Operations is an evolving and changing environment, with our members serving in some of the most dangerous hot spots in the world.

It is intended that the National Commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of Peacekeeping coincides with the allocation of the site for the National Peacekeeping Memorial in ANZAC Parade in Canberra. Ostensively, we would like to seek this commemoration on the 14th of September 2007.

I ask all State Branch committees to consider planning for this commemoration **now**. Your State Governments should be advised of this important commemoration, along with the State Branches of the RSL and other ESO. Make this commemoration a memorable occasion and don't forget to seek grants from DVA to assist you in this commemoration.

22. Development of Bilateral Relationships with ESO. It is my intention to further strengthen our ties with the RSL, VVAA and other ESO. There are many reasons for this development. Working cohesively together, we will be able to gain support of these ESO for a number of our issues that can be represented on a united front. Other tangible benefits gained will be resource sharing, referrals of cases for our constituency, development of the National Younger Veteran Outreach Program, and taking up the legacy that has been hard fought and won by our predecessors. I will be expecting this development to also be implemented at State/Territory and local levels.

APPVA will lead the way for multi-eligibility for ADF current and ex-serving members and Younger Veterans. This is imperative that we achieve this with National ESO support.

23. Continuation of our 7 Point Agenda. The 7-point agenda that was agreed in our AGM of November 2004 remains extant. These points are the following:

a. **Reclassification of the Army Training Support Team to East Timor (ATST-EM),** from Peacetime to Warlike Service. The reclassification will be consistent with the conditions of service of all ADF members who served in East Timor at the time of the deployment and operations of ATST-EM. It will also be consistent with the contributing countries to the training of the FALANTIL forces to the East Timor Infantry Battalions, of which they received their country's Active Service conditions.

b. **Anomalies with Offsetting of the Special Rate of Disability Pension (SRDP) of the MRCA.** That the offsetting provisions of the MRCA under the election to choose the option of the SRDP (s197), with severe penalty for receiving either or both a pension or lump sum under a Commonwealth Superannuation (COMSUPER) scheme as a result of the retirement under s204 (Offsets) (5)(b). It is also noted that further reduction may be inflicted if the person has retired voluntarily, or has been compulsorily retired, from his or her work, under s204(5)(a) of the MRCA. This is seen as a brutal reduction to a given veteran under the MRCA. Under the VEA and/or SRCA (if the member has dual eligibility or not), the Special Rate of pension or Lump sum Permanent Impairment (PI) is **not offset** as for s204 of MRCA. This is an anomaly that requires rectification to make the SRDP a viable option for those who are in receipt of COMSUPER pensions or lump sums and wish to make the election toward an attractive option within the MRCA.

c. **Commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of Australian Peacekeeping.** As noted earlier, it is a focus of the APPVA for 2007 to commemorate this significant milestone in our Nation's history. This includes an increased tempo in the support of fund-raising for the National Peacekeeping Memorial on ANZAC Parade in Canberra.

d. **Health Study of Veterans 1991-1995.** It has been noted by practitioners and welfare officers of the APPVA, inclusive of ESO feed-back to this association, that a large number of veterans who have served in Rwanda, Somalia and Cambodia are reporting high incidences of health problems. The main problem appears to be mental health. In order to provide a beneficial approach toward these conditions, and allowance for certain medical conditions to be admitted to the Statement of Principles (SOPs) of the VEA/MRCA, a comprehensive Health Study of veterans who served in these key deployments has been identified. Conditions such as Gastro Oesophical Reflux disease from large doses of Doxycycline is one area that needs to be studied. Mental health of these veterans has been noted to have deteriorated. A study of lipids of these veterans may also be advantageous for identifying early intervention strategies and prevention of further worsening of a particular veterans' health.

Whilst the APPVA appreciates that the CMVH is conducting ongoing studies for East Timor, Solomon Islands, with intentions to cover Afghanistan and Iraq veterans; it would be prudent for the Department of Veterans' affairs to have a snapshot of the physiological and psychological health of veterans who served during 1991-1995.

e. **Retention of ADF Personnel.** This matter has been raised in 2006 and will continue to be discussed into 2007. It is inspiring to note that the Minister of Veterans' Affairs understands the emotional and psychological impact of a service member and his/her family when they have been given notice to be medically discharged. The APPVA will remain vigilant in seeking a first class seamless transition for these ADF members and to allow them to maintain their self-esteem, whilst providing a capability for the ADF in the form of Part Time service.

f. **Renaming of the Vietnam Veterans' Counselling Service (VVCS).** The APPVA has been lobbying since 2001 to seek a name change to the VVCS. The main reason is that Younger Veterans feel that the VVCS is for Vietnam Veterans only. It takes a significant amount of time to convince these veterans otherwise and that the service is also for Defence Force and Younger Veterans. The APPVA believes that many Younger Veterans have not used the service simply, because of its name. In addition, with the changing dynamics of the increased tempo of operations since 1989 to the present, the ADF is sending more troops overseas than it has during the Vietnam War. Many of these veterans and their families will have served on at least 3-4 operations, which has potential to have an effect on the veterans' health. The Canadian Armed Forces identified these Multiple Operational Deployments as "*Operational Stress Injury (OSI)*". It is identified by the APPVA that the VVCS needs to be meeting the needs of Younger Veterans, and therefore the name change to *The Veterans' Counselling Service* is strongly advocated. It should also be noted that due recognition is made to the hard work of Vietnam Veterans who established this vital service.

g. **Post 1975 Medal Entitlement Review.** There have been recorded a large amount of medal anomalies since 1975, mainly during the period 1989 to the present. Many veterans have missed out on medals due to time constraints and withdrawal from an operation due to reasons beyond their control. In addition, the APPVA would like to see equity in the post 75 medal entitlements and match those for the veterans prior to 75, including WWII. The

APPVA has proposed that an Operational Service medal be struck for those members force assigned to a given Warlike Operation, who were not recognised with a Campaign Medal. This would be consistent with the philosophy of a Campaign medal and provide consistency with those who served prior to 1975.

In addition, given the special nature of Peacekeeping Operations, particularly those classified as Non-warlike or peacekeeping service, the APPVA proposes a special medal be struck to recognise the special nature of Peacekeeping. The Australian Service Medal has a large number of clasps, which do not necessarily recognise peacekeeping, but Non warlike service in a given country. The proposed Australian Peacekeeping Medal would ostensibly recognise the special nature and demanding service of Peacekeeping operations that have been deemed non-warlike.

Humanitarian service also deserves recognition. Perhaps not in the form of the Humanitarian Overseas Service Medal (HOSM), but perhaps as a clasp to the ASM? The ADF has been involved in a large number of deployed Humanitarian operations in the S.W. Pacific and elsewhere since the early 1980s to the present time. This service is unique, in that ADF members are deployed to countries that lack infrastructure to that in comparison to Australia. There are also larger risks with disease and health exposures, in comparison to that of Australia. It is therefore proposed that this service is recognised.

Other anomalies are the awarding of the ASM for the Commonwealth Monitoring Force in Rhodesia (CMF-R) and for other operations.

24. Submissions. It is intended to lodge the following submissions for 2007:

- a. Health Study for veterans who served overseas during 1991-1995.
- b. SRDP Offsetting in the MRCA (second submission).
- c. Inquiry into Australia's involvement in Peacekeeping Operations – to the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee's inquiry (FADT).
- d. Others as required.

25. Membership. Membership will be the key element to our survivability. We need members to provide political clout and to also provide growth in our association. As other ESO are beginning to decline in numbers, the APPVA is growing. We need to maintain this growth in members, in order to attain critical mass. Membership fees also aid the APPVA in providing administrative costs for the various committees to function and represent our clientele on a range of issues and matters.

26. Development of Working Relationships with the ADF. It is my intention to further develop working relationships with the ADF in order to provide peer support to current serving members, along with assistance during their transition phase into civilian street. This does not necessarily mean that these members are medical dischargees. These members may also be discharging at the own volition and need our services to assist them obtaining their entitlements.

One of the focus points of function would be for the APPVA to be intrinsically involved with the ADF Transition Management Service (TMS), in order to assist members in their claims for compensation and other entitlements. Presentations at the ADF Transition Seminars are a start point which we need to be involved in all regions. Additional assistance is thought to be of a consultative measure in order to provide feed-back to the CDF of how the Medical Discharge process is being delivered and to rectify any problem areas.

APPVA involvement with Contingents Returning to Australia or even prior to deployment would provide members with the knowledge that we are available to assist in any degree possible, given our resources and other constraints.

26. Mail Out From DVA to SM Veterans. It is intended that the APPVA approach DVA in 2007, in order to request a mail-out to all SM veterans advising them of the 60th Anniversary and the existence of the APPVA. This will provide a broad knowledge of the Anniversary, with the potential to provide information to those veterans who may not be aware of this commemoration. It would also provide knowledge to these veterans that the APPVA does exist and that we exist for them.

27. Removal of Totally Temporary Incapacity (TTI) at age 50. It is intended to seek the removal of TTI for veterans who are 50 years of age or higher. It is felt that TTI may well see improvement for Younger Veterans aged 20-40 years of age, however given the competitive job market, the ability to seek employment with disabilities, provides a difficult situation for a veteran of this age group. Simply put, the job market are very reluctant to employ 50 year olds and above who have significant disabilities.

Therefore, without placing a burden on the veteran concerned, with the stress of waiting up to 2 years to be considered for TPI, it should be an automatic decision that if the veteran meets the requirements of s24 of the VEA, then TTI is not an option, but rather TPI. This will give the veteran and his family peace of mind and also access to entitlements for those in receipt of TPI, including WSP and Veteran Children Education Scheme (VCES).

28. Development of Working Relationships with Police. It is imperative that the APPVA develops working relationships with Police veterans and members. The International Deployment Group (IDG), which is administered by the Federal Police in Canberra is considered a vital link for the APPVA in order to provide peer support and our services to those Police force members who have deployed or who are about to deploy. We have many Police veterans in our membership and we need to build further relationships with the police.

29. ANZAC Day March – Place Of Prominence. As this year is the 60th Anniversary of Australian Peacekeeping, it has been a desire of many members to be in a place of prominence with the respective ANZAC Day marches around Australia. Unfortunately, this year also culminates the 100th Anniversary of the Army Intelligence Corps and the 50th Anniversary of the Special Air Service Regiment (SASR). There has been difficulty in competing with these groups, along with problems being accepted by the march organisers (mainly RSL) in several states.

The march prominence is up to the State Branches to organise and negotiate with their respective State/Territory or Local organisers. Some members have indicated that perhaps a place of prominence could be in the 60th year of PK on ANZAC Day in 2008. It will be the responsibility of the Branches to negotiate such placing.

Media awareness of the 60th Anniversary is crucial in getting the message out about the

Commemoration. Each State/Territory and region has media. Use this free media to get the message out. Ensure that your Branch's' reunion is in the respective RSL papers, the newspapers and also with radio and television. Do a small brief for these media to promote the 60th Anniversary and the National Peacekeeping Memorial in Canberra.

30. National ESO Forum. The APPVA has been approached to facilitate a National ESO Forum, similar to that of 2004, prior to the Federal election. Its purpose is to raise a number of common issues between the National ESOs and place the Government on notice that we would like to see the issues resolved. It is more than likely that this forum will be held in Canberra with the requested representation of all National ESO Presidents.

31. Carer Health. Carer Health is a main point of concern for the APPVA. Too often we rely heavily on our carers, who are mainly our partners to endure great distress as a result of caring for their loved ones. The Government is getting a very cheap Carer service for those veterans who are severely incapacitated or TPI. Whilst a Carer may be entitled to the Pensioner Concession Card (PCC), dependant upon whether or not they are in receipt of the Carer Payment or WSP, the Carer is not eligible for a Health Care Card.

A Health Care Card for these hard working Carers will provide tangible benefits toward the health of those carers who care for severely disabled veterans. This is an area that we will be seeking to have Government consider in the coming election. We will be seeking bilateral support from National ESOs in relation to this matter.

32. Repatriation Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (RPBS). The RPBS was **free** to any veteran who was eligible for pharmaceuticals as a result of their service related illness, wounds or injury. The Government placed a tariff on the scheme due to the cost blow-out, at the expense of veterans' entitlements. This is another erosion of benefits for veterans and the cost is increasing. The cost for each pharmaceutical under the VEA is now \$4.90 per script item. Whilst it is acknowledged that a veteran and/or his/her partner receive a Pharmaceutical Allowance (PA) of \$5.80 or partnered at \$2.90; the PA is certainly well and truly spent on more than one pharmaceutical per fortnight. Those veterans who suffer a range of illnesses and require a number of scripts per fortnight are certainly losing out in money. Particularly if they are pensioners.

It is acknowledged that the MRCA and MCRS will pay for the full cost of any reasonable pharmaceutical required to the accepted condition. Perhaps this is one method that Younger Veterans may be able to save, dependant upon their accepted conditions and dual eligibility.

However, whilst we observe the erosion of yet another veteran entitlement, it should be noted that the Government in the last Budget will increase the safety net by an additional 2 scripts per year until 2010, when it will be 10 scripts above the Concessional Safety Net. In 2006 the safety net was for 54 scripts, for 2007 it is now 56 scripts.

33. Veterans' Children Education Scheme (VCES). The VCES is an assistance scheme for disabled veterans to provide schooling for their children. It is only available to veterans who are in receipt of TPI. The APPVA believes that given the restrictive payment of TTI, which prevents the veteran from accessing the Service Pension, Defence Force Income Support Allowance (DFISA), and other Special Rate benefits, that the veteran is an extreme disadvantage. This is most evident for those veterans who are supporting a young family, who are on TTI and have no access to the TPI benefits.

It is strongly felt that the veterans in receipt of TTI should not be placed into financial hardship in order to put their children through school. It is therefore strongly recommended that legislation is changed to reflect the need for Younger Veterans on TTI to effectively allow their children education in line with the VCES.

34. Income Support for Younger Veterans on TTI. Following the VCES matter in 33, the APPVA has noted that a number of Younger Veterans on TTI, are in dire need of Income Support. The veteran is unable to apply for Disability Support Pension (DSP) or DFISA, until the injury, wound or illness is deemed to be permanent. Therefore, the Younger Veteran needs to be TPI in order to gain any income support. TTI is usually for a period of up to 24 months. In a recent case a Young East Timor vet was granted TTI for 5 years. These are exceptionally long periods for any veteran to endure financial hardship, particularly with a young family, mortgage, car and schooling. In most cases the Carer (usually the partner), is forced to work in order to make ends meet.

The APPVA seeks Government consideration to provide TTI veterans with TPI benefits, in order to maintain a quality of life and lift the financial burden from the veteran and his/her family.

Conclusion.

35. In conclusion, 2006 was a very successful year for the APPVA. We continue to provide quality consultation with the Government and this has been duly noted and recognised by the Minister for Veterans' Affairs. Many successful outcomes have arisen from 2006, most notably the reclassification of service for Rwandan veterans. We have established Branches in S.A., NSW, VIC and NQLD. These branches will now hold a degree of accountability and be lawfully bound by the respective State/Territory Legislation. This provides confidence to our members that we are able to perform to a high standard, whilst being accountable.

36. 2007 will bring many challenges. The most significant will be the 60th Anniversary of Australian Peacekeeping. In addition, the site allocation and development of the National Peacekeeping Memorial on ANZAC Parade in Canberra will be a significant milestone in the recognition of the service of our peacekeepers, peacemakers and humanitarian operations.

37. Other important areas concerning the health, well-being and quality of life of our veterans will remain a priority. Lobbying for the listed issues will be rigorous and we will look forward to resolution of these matters.

Yours Sincerely,

P.A. Copeland,
National President.