

**The Hon Alan Griffin MP
Minister for Veterans' Affairs**

**The Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans'
Association (APPVA) Annual General Meeting**

Speaking notes

The Royal Australia Air Force's Base

Laverton

Victoria

9:00 am

Saturday, 7 February 2009

You have been requested to speak on:

- **Developments within the younger veteran constituency**
- **Younger veterans in residential care**
- **MRCA review**
- **Recent funding grants**
- **Recognition**
- **Closing remarks**

Developments within the younger veteran constituency

Australian Peacekeepers Study

- \$550,000 Australian Government funding.
- Aims to examine the long-term effects of peacekeeping on mental health.
- Covers deployments during the 1990s to Rwanda, Somalia, Cambodia, Namibia, Western Sahara; also East Timor deployments during 1999-2002.
- Associate Professor Graeme Hawthorne, University of Melbourne, is undertaking the research, in collaboration with other researchers.
- Advisory committee is being formed comprising principal researchers, a representative from DVA, and representatives from the veteran community.
- Paul Copeland will represent APPVA.
- The first Committee meeting is expected in February 2009. Expect the committee to meet twice a year, with the final report in 2010.

RMA review of Gulf war Syndrome

- I welcome the decision by the Repatriation Medical Authority to review the Statement of Principle on Gulf War Syndrome.
- The Repatriation Medical Authority will provide independent medical advice on whether Gulf War Syndrome is a disease as defined in section 5D of the *Veterans' Entitlement Act 1986*.
- Written submissions close on 29 May 2009.
- I welcome any new information which help improve our support and compensation to veterans.
- Regardless of the review's outcome, Gulf War veterans suffering ill effects from their service can access compensation and health care.

Younger veterans in residential care

- DVA advocates on behalf of younger veterans with a disability to help them access accommodation through the relevant Commonwealth and State agencies.
- The joint Commonwealth-State program, "Younger People with a Disability in Residential Aged Care Initiative" is aimed at providing alternative

accommodation options for people aged under 65 who are living in residential aged care facilities.

- The program will seek more appropriate care for younger residents.
- Those people aged under 50 will be the initial priority of the program. There are very few veterans of this age living in government-funded residential aged care facilities.
- A New National Disability Agreement was struck at the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in November 2008.
- Governments agreed to work together to ensure younger veterans have access to disability services – when DVA programs are not available, then care and services will be provided to the veteran through this agreement.

MRCA review

- Election commitment to review Military Compensation arrangements.
- The Review will cover:
 - The operation to date of the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004* (MRCA);
 - The legislative schemes prior to MRCA and any anomalies that exist within these schemes;
 - The level of medical and financial care provided to Defence personnel injured during peacetime service; and
 - The suitability of access to military compensation schemes for Australian Federal Police deployed overseas.
- I expect to announce the terms of reference within the next few weeks.

Recent Funding Grants

- The planned \$3 million National Peacekeepers Memorial in Canberra will commemorate the important part Australian peacekeepers have played and continue to play in restoring peace and stability across the globe.
- Winning design announced in December.
- Australian Government provided \$200,000 seed funding to get the National Peacekeepers Memorial project off the ground.
- APPVA and its branches have received funding of almost \$400,000 over the past two years through BEST and *Saluting Their Service*.

Recognition

- Recognising the service of younger veterans is important.

- Not just compensation and support, but when the Australian community gathers on Anzac Day that they not only honour the service of those on the Western Front or Kokoda but also East Timor, Somalia or Iraq.
- To encourage this, the Anzac Day poster for 2009 honours the 10 anniversary of INTERFET – the International Force in East Timor – which commenced in September 1999.
- The poster will be distributed Australia-wide, to all schools, ESOs, aged care facilities and through the offices of Members of Parliament.
- Indeed, when I was in France for the first Dawn Service on the Western Front last year, DVA's Anzac Day poster was displayed throughout the village of Villers-Bretonneux, so the poster may even be found in France this year as well.

Closing remarks

- My relationship with APPVA is very important.
- I value the advice and advocacy that the organisation provides me personally and DVA.
- We have more to achieve and 2009 will be a year of hard work.
- By the time we meet here again next year, many of the projects I have mentioned will have come to fruition.

ENDS