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CAMARADERIE

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**UPDATE ON
VETS V THE ATO**

**NEW GUINEA
VOLUNTEER RIFLES**

**OPERATIONAL V NON-
OPERATIONAL SERVICE**

DEFENCE FORCE WELFARE ASSOCIATION

www.dfwa.org.au

NATIONAL OFFICE ROUNDUP (November 2020 – February 2021)



Who would have possibly thought 12 months ago that nation would still be still suffering lockdowns so severe that, in one State at least, saw it's residents isolated not just from the rest of the country but from household to household, and from their routine lives of work, school and play. Surely 2020 was the year from hell that is spilling into 2021. The crippling drought that pervaded the nation for years and the soul-destroying bush fires and even subsequent floods of last year were bad enough, but the economically ruinous all-too-painful pandemic has likely wreaked more havoc than all other natural disasters in recent living memory combined.

But not to dwell on the Nation's woes, closer to home and the period since the last edition of Camaraderie, it should be noted that, despite continuing, rightful and strong calls for a Royal Commission into veterans suicides, the work of the interim National Commissioner for Defence and Veteran Suicide Prevention to inquire into suicides of serving and former members of the ADF has gained momentum and is rolling on apace. As is the welcome work of the Veteran Family Advocate, Ms Gwen Cherne, who is increasingly becoming influential in giving a stronger voice to veterans' families, particularly as servicemen and women transition from the ADF.

DFWA's position on the appointment of the interim Commissioner is that her appointment should be seen as an opportunity to lay out a framework for the future. The need to understand the reasons and background of the veteran suicides going back to 2001 is important for developing strategies going forward. DFWA welcomes the expansion of the Commissioner's Terms of Reference during the Parliamentary debate in December 2020 on the Bills establishing her appointment. Clarity is now in place confirming that any review of past Defence and Veteran Suicides can include any previous death by suicide, or suspected suicide, of ADF member or veteran.

Two other particular areas of concern that progressed over the last four months relate to the work of the newly established ADF Transition Authority, and the Government's interim response to the 69 recommendations made in the Productivity Commission's report 'A Better Way to Support Veterans.'

In the latter case, that response addressed 25 of the recommendations, with a particular focus on mental health, wellbeing, employment support and transition. The remaining recommendations will be addressed in the 2021-2022 Budget that looms mid year. The consultation process with the ex-service community to assist in the development of the Government's final response is ongoing at this very moment. Areas specifically under

examination include a possible Administration Act to overcome inherent acknowledged problems that three Acts impose, the potential need for two types of legislation for veterans support, a simplified MRCA, some harmonisation across different Acts, and the need for some changes to the Governance arrangements of DVA and its structure. Considerable feedback is already available from the many submissions received by the Productivity Commission into its inquiry into Compensation and Rehabilitation for Veterans.

As for ADF's Transition Authority, teething problems continue to prevail with numerous complaints flowing about the nature of the transition process at so-to-speak 'grass roots levels'. All that, perhaps at least in part, caused by the postponement of all face-to-face ADF Member and Family Transition Seminars through to at least 30 June 2021. The Authority has informed that it is working on finalising the seminar schedule post that date, albeit there appears no assurance that face-to-face arrangements will actually operate later in the year. The transition process will thus likely remain problematic for many looking for guidance and/or assistance at a time that has proven to be stressful for most on leaving after giving military service to their country.

Moving away from specific campaign issue and/or politics, readers are invited to note that, as of 1 December 2020, DFWA's National Office has moved with the kind support of RMC's Commandant and staff to a new location within the Duntroon precinct at Building D2 on Bruche Road. The old location in Building A81 on Lavarack-Harrison Road served the Association well for nearly 30 years. Having been built as temporary accommodation for Cadets in 1972, the building and those close by are to be finally demolished.

No National Office Roundup could not be complete without acknowledging the welcome sponsorship by The Bradford Exchange. Their advertisements is within the pages of this Camaraderie. If ever in need of high quality collectable memorabilia for personal use or as a gift to mark a commemorative occasion, please consider an item from The Bradford Exchange as a buying option.

Finally, a big thanks is extended to those members and friends of DFWA who have kindly acknowledged the good work of the Association by donating just a little in recognition that membership dues alone would be insufficient to keep us functioning in the way we have since inauguration in 1959. Your donations are always gratefully received. Our purpose remains as rock solid as it did all those years ago; that purpose being to.....'foster the best interests and welfare of all members of the Australian Defence Force and their families in any matter likely to affect them during and after their period of service'.

Alf Jaugietis - Executive Director