

VVAG - VIETNAM VETERANS ACTION GROUP



From the Desk of the Secretary

In response to the email statement made by Ross Himona to the various E- Vietnam Veterans nets concerning the use of the Waitangi Tribunal as vehicle to help obtain justice, VVAG says...

the Waitangi Claim 1401 was lodged on behalf of Bishop Hui Vercoe with VVAG'S support and it has achieved several important milestones... they being

1/ It has refocused the plight of all Vietnam Veterans in addressing some of the important issues not resolved by the MOU, in particular, affected children's entitlement to be treated as eligible for war pension disability status and a free medical check up for Veterans and their health issues.

2/ The Tribunal course of action has been given great exposure via the media thus keeping the public informed of the ongoing battle for justice for all the Vietnam Veterans and their families. The MOU currently has assisted less than 1% of the veterans (19 out of the possible 3280) and those affected by the their parents service in Vietnam.

3/ As stated there is legal aid available through the Waitangi Claims Tribunal to assist the legal team to get all the evidence together for presentation. [The same evidence of course can be used in any legal forum such as the High Court on a Representative Class Action] Please note that legal aid has not yet been granted, but there is a provision in the law for it and application has been made. This means that this process is cost affective insofar that the majority of the work deemed necessary to bring the 40 years of denial and reparation to a close, thus alleviating the expense for the individual veterans and their families.

4/ The growing support by some members of Parliament is a good thing. The simple fact that Bishop Vercoe is a Vietnam Veteran and the recently retired Anglican Bishop of Aotearoa because of failing health issues. He is one of the most respected members of our NZ community and as named as our Tribunal Claimant should arguably see this issue enquired into with integrity, honesty of intent and utmost good faith. [see Tribunal direction on VVAG website where wording show already such treatment]

6/ Since the AOJWG enquiry has been completed{April 2006} and the MOU {December 2006} put in place, significant information has become available {Professor Al Rowlands study NZ Vietnam Veterans with Vietnam Veterans DNA damage {August 2006}. The DNA testing of Veterans and their children is an absolute necessity. Our children need to be confident that when they decide to have children that their children that are born have a much better chance being born healthy, not with many of the problems that many of us are currently facing. There are far too many of our children that will not have children unless this issue is resolved. This is only one of the issues not addressed by MOU.

7/ I have a letter signed By Rick Barker and Phil Goff dated 24th July 2007 stating that the MOU signed off with NZRSA, EVSA and there is no intention to reopen the negotiations. This letter signifies the entrenched position of the NZ Government, yet, an examination of the AOJWG report April 2006, the, then released relevant cabinet papers and the MOU display no reasoning for such an entrenched position. The Treaty Claims process and the High Court Judicial Revue process are means by which Government can be forced to justify its watered down package.

8/ The question must be asked is why the RNZRSA submission to AOJWG was not accepted in full as VVAG believe it is a very good submission and states our case perfectly. If this had been done, this would be all done and dusted and next years parade would be one of real meaning and the Bishops claim would not be necessary. The same applies to AOJWG, EVSA submissions. Hence the entry of VVAG to help address the anomalies.

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Finally the last statement made by Ross Himona is typical of an ex “spook”, ie the famous oxymoron Military Intelligence after stating partial truths evolving into straight out disinformation insofar that the claim will add nothing to the process. As you have seen by the above statements that is not true. The rest of the statement quote ‘Those of you who proclaim otherwise are guilty of ignorance of Waitangi Tribunal process and worse still, of raising false hopes’. This is a spurious comment as our Barrister is and has been involved with the Waitangi Tribunal issues for the last 20 years and after referring Ross’s statement to him he had this to say...” There is a degree of populist truth in Mr Himona’s words however the Orakei [Bastion Point] Report of 1987, the Muriwhenua Fishing Report 1988, both of which I worked on as assigned Research Officer gave some clear unquestionable results, Maori collectively as 58 chosen ‘iwi’ or individually through the Aotearoa Fisheries Ltd now own, manage and control 53% of the 4th biggest sea Fisheries Zone on the planet. The Bastion Point Report brought some measure of reconciliation and peace to what was from 1979/1986 a cancerous sore in the Pakeha-Maori relations... not to mention the Te Reo and Te Reo Broadcasting Reports that have seen the tax payers dollars spent on the official language of this nation Maori, increase into the per annum millions, from 1985—2005... “Mr Harman also asks what exact experiences of Tribunal process as quite frankly neither he nor any of his legal colleagues have seen or heard of any such participation.”

