

VVAG - VIETNAM VETERANS ACTION GROUP



From the Desk of the Secretary

Submission from the Vietnam Veterans Action Group Executive For the Law Commission rewrite of the War Pensions Act

23rd November 2008

This has been agreed in principal by the membership of VVAG,

It is agreed in principal to the submission from the EVSA but there are fundamental differences being: ---

- 1/ The current travel/ mileage allowance should stay because this allows veterans to attend the funerals and the well being of the deceased families. If the allowance is changed to what has been proposed many Veterans and family would be unable to attend because of the expense. The current allowance allows them to do so. It would be a travesty of justice to deny the veteran the ability to attend any funeral or gathering of the Veterans because of affordability.
- 2/ An increase in pension similar to the Australian standards. If you are a TPI ie that is over 70% permanently incapacitated and unable to work because of your war related disabilities you receive as a single person not only a Gold Card but approximately \$A 850.00 a week. The current NZ War service pension is disgraceful we are treated as 3rd class citizens and this is not acceptable. The ACC is 80% of the minimum wage we are currently being paid about 30%. This is not acceptable. The Veterans are being discriminated against. WE should be on at least the same rate. It is very important that we can live with dignity. This measure will also help the retention of Service Personnel
- 3/ A Gold card similar to the Australian Gold Card that covers the Veterans and their families for all health conditions.
- 4/ A decent liveable pension for all mothers of Vietnam Veterans children for life. For any person who is a full time carer of the Veteran or affected child. Also for any child of a Vietnam Veteran who has been affected by the Veterans service and are unable to work because of disabilities whether mental or physical or both. It is very important that these persons are able to live with dignity. It is an entitlement not charity. This is a Government obligation.
- 5/ A fund to be set up for the research into Dioxin poisoning and improving methods in implementing a quality of life for not only the Veterans but also their families.

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6/ The Government has a Covenant of Duty of Care for life to the Military. This has been sadly abused by the respective Governments for decades. All War/disability pensions and allowances are an entitlement for life and should be portable to where ever the Veteran chooses to reside. The current situation has been a failure. Only 7 years ago both the Prime Ministers of NZ, Helen Clarke and Australia John Howard stated in a joint statement that no Veteran would be disadvantaged by living in Australia or New Zealand. One would have expected integrity from our erstwhile leaders and respective staff but this has proven to be a falsehood and needs to be rectified immediately.

7/ The funeral allowance is pathetic under today's standards. It costs at least \$6500.00 for a minimal funeral. The rewrite should include this update.

8/ Any Veteran who is unable to work full time but can do some part time work should not have their pension reduced with the money that they may earn if this is still under or equal to the minimum average wage. This extra money should be exempt from income tax.

9/ Any pension/disability payments made to the Veterans or their families should not be considered as taxable income if under the minimum average wage.

10/ All allowances/pensions to be indexed to CPI reviewed 6 monthly from the start of the financial year.

The MOU has only catered for about 1% of the affected persons. The rewrite of the War Pensions Act must include provision for all Veterans and family members and the current serving Military personnel.

On behalf of the Members and the Executive of VVAG

Bruce Weir Secretary