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# THE RETURNED & SERVICES LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA LIMITED

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

ABN 63 008 488 097

**From:** Rear Admiral Ken Doolan AO RAN (Retd)  
National President

13 February 2015

Mr Wayne Delahoy  
Vietnams Veterans Family Study

By email: [vvfsfeedback@dva.gov.au](mailto:vvfsfeedback@dva.gov.au)

Dear Mr Delahoy,

The Returned & Services League welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Vietnam Veterans Family Study (VVFS).

After deliberations at the recent RSL National Veterans' Affairs Committee meeting the following observations/recommendations are forwarded for consideration:

- The RSL acknowledges the effort that has gone into developing the report and thanks the Department of Veteran's Affairs in funding this most important study.
- The survey results reaffirm the need for services for partners and children of Vietnam veterans as the mental health consequences in particular impact the family. The survey results also alert both government and ex-service organisations to the potential need for support for grandchildren of veterans and allow them to better plan for future service provision.
- Notwithstanding the availability of access to the Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VVCS) to sons and daughters (of any age) of Vietnam veterans, children may be more likely to feel comfortable accessing mainstream health professionals or they may first present to a mainstream health professional if they haven't linked their own issues to their parent's service. DVA funding will be required to access this mental health service.
- There is a need for a treatment path and compensation for descendants of Vietnam veterans who are unable to work because of the link of their own mental condition to their parent's service in Vietnam.
- While many of the children of Vietnam veterans have missed out on help and as a result suffered the consequences of their parent's war service, some lessons can be learned for those currently serving.
  - We would support the education of veterans and their partners about the potential impact of PTSD and other mental health issues on their parenting and as a result on the mental wellbeing of their children.

LEST WE FORGET

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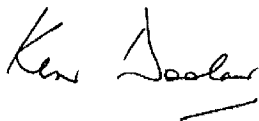
THE PRICE OF LIBERTY IS ETERNAL VIGILANCE

Often education alerts people to the flow on effects of their own behaviour and knowledge can help them realise that they need to seek help early rather than later. There are many parenting programs that can assist with strategies to help parents cope with difficult circumstances and these together with other professional and peer services may help reduce the effects on children of current veterans in the future.

- The survey points to a link between mental health issues and financial stress and our experience with families where the veteran has mental health issues confirms this. We would support opportunities for financial education for veterans and their partners during and on leaving the military.
- The period of transition out of the military appears to be a critical time to identify and address mental health issues. We would support more time, resources and education in this vital period for both veterans and their families to help them better cope with potential effects of their service. In particular, we support programs that identify the aspects of military culture (harsh discipline, giving orders) that are incompatible with civilian life and help veterans 'unlearn' potentially damaging and isolating behaviours that can have long term effects on their relationships with family and friends.
- We would support increasing the knowledge of veterans' issues and the effects of war on them and their families among mainstream health practitioners – GPs, counsellors, social workers, psychologists, etc. We believe this is best done through educational institutions and professional associations

The RSL believes that this study is a pleasing first step in the proper recognition and support of the families of Vietnam Veterans. We look forward to further consultations with DVA in the formulation of the response and recommendations to Government,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ken Seeler". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.