

**MINUTES OF THE F-111 DESEAL/RESEAL
SUPPORT GROUP MEETING
HELD
IPSWICH RSL, LOWRY ST, NTH IPSWICH
SUNDAY 6TH AUGUST 2006**

Ian Fraser opened the meeting at 9.41am.

APOLOGIES

Apologies were accepted from the Minister for Veterans' Affairs and several Support Group Members

SECRETARY POSITION

A letter of resignation was read out. Raeleen Ramsden has resigned as the Support Group Secretary. Raeleen has been our Secretary for over 6 years and the Committee thanks her for her commitment. Raeleen has accepted a redundancy from her employer and she and Tony will spend the next several months traveling so she felt it best to resign her position. Raeleen wishes to remain in contact with the Support Group. We wish Tony and herself the very best for their travels.

The position of Secretary was declared open. Nominations will be called for later in the Meeting to allow any nominees to consider the position.

LEST WE FORGET

One Minutes silence was observed to honour those desealers who are no longer with us. Special mention was made of the desealers who have passed away since the last meeting – Chris Bate and Tom Tonkin.

LABOR PARTY REPRESENTATION MEETING

Kathleen reported on the 25th July meeting with Shadow Minister for Defence Personnel and Member for Oxley held at Goodna. The meeting had good media representation with ABC News, Channel 10 News, ABC Radio National, 612 ABC, the Queensland Times Newspapers and several local free press newspapers attending. The Senator was only available for 1 hour. Discussions on the ex-gratia payment (or lack thereof) took the bulk of time – over 40 minutes, then the issues moved to compensation, taxation and litigation. The Senator asked Kathleen to submit a letter outlining the major points raised, and a copy is attached. Kathleen has since had four phone calls from the Senator's office seeking clarification of items and the Senator will be making an address next week.

MINISTER FOR VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Ian reported on recent discussions with the Minister for Veterans' Affairs and advised that the Minister wants a meeting with all desealers as soon as possible. Ian requested that formal invitations go out to all desealers through the DVA because they have a full listing of all desealers and we only have approx 380 members registered. We are yet to hear.

MEMBER FOR BLAIR

Cameron Thompson MP was invited to report on any update he may have obtained from the Minister regarding the deseal issues. Cameron is disappointed that no progress has been made on the ex-gratia situation. He would like to see a positive outcome for all tank entry workers. Parliament sits again next week and Cameron will revisit the issues in Canberra on the pick and patch issues.

In relation to the Section 180A, the beaurocrats want another more expanded inquiry on fuel tank and enclosed spaces effect of aircraft fuels and chemicals. This would have the effect of diluting the inquiry to a broad service spread from MT Fitters to all types of aircraft. Then a decision could be made on Section 180A.

It appears that as far as the Minister is concerned, on advise received, he is not interested in enacting Section 180A for desealers.

A general discussion ensued where members raised the issue that pick and patch workers were in fact working in a fuel damp environment. Kathleen raised the point that the DVA has agreed to a full inquiry into aircraft fuels and we don't want to be diluted into that. Cameron agreed. Ian again reiterated that SHOAMP included the pick and patch workers, it is clearly noted in the minutes of the SHOAMP meetings. Pick and Patch workers should be included in the ex-gratia payment and the Committee will continue to push for their inclusion.

Cameron Thompson wants the pick and patch workers included, he wants a good outcome for us and he wants the right decision.

Ian stated that aside from the unpaid ex-gratia recipients, that for those who have received their ex-gratia payment, compensation is not forthcoming. Deseal specific claims are being rejected under VEA and Military Compensation is inadequate and inequitable because of the large variance of zero to \$247,000 depending on the date of injury.

Cameron agreed and said the Minister is sitting on the fence in limbo. We all need a decision on the pick and patch workers so we can move forward.

Trevor Wuoti raised the issue of DVA specialists and the DVA requirement to use specific words such as "causal link", "genetic", "basis of probabilities", and said that these words or lack of them are enough to have your case denied. He said

whether they are deseal related is not addressed. Kathleen confirmed there are five specific questions DVA ask the specialist to address. These are generic questions asking opinion as to whether the specialist considers the condition "service related", rather than "deseal related". She advised that members should read the whole diagnosis, then the five questions at the back of each report and you may see significant differences. Also, it appears that DVA does not read the diagnosis, only the answers to the questions.

Cameron Thompson suggested that all members obtain copies of all reports under FOI and that we all get together and compare notes and search out group discrepancies.

Nev Johnston told the members that even though you apply under FOI, you may not receive all the information. He sought a 15 page document under FOI and received pages 5 and 6 only. He again requested it and again received pages 5 and 6 only.

Trevor confirmed that DVA will not give you any information which may assist you in your case. When he attended the Veterans' Review Board, DVA had to provide all documentation, not just some.

The civilian workers have to pay to obtain DVA FOI documents. This discussion was then adjourned to general business.

SEA OF ORANGE AWARENESS GROUP

The Sea of Orange Forum in Toowoomba on 24th July was discussed by Ian. He said we did not broadcast the Forum to members because we needed to ensure this was not a rat bag protest group and we didn't want to be associated with it if it was. However, it was a very professionally organized Forum and both the Minister and Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs and the Deputy Commissioner for DVA copped a hammering. The Sea of Orange Awareness Group is about individual injured service and ex-service personnel joining with all interested Ex-Service Organisations to make changes in the way DVA treats the injured. It was very successful for the F-111 Deseal/Reseal Support Group because we were the only group interviewed by the media and our unique circumstances see us with military and civilian, male and female affected personnel. We have Veteran's, Peacekeepers and general defence service participants so we actually cover the broadest spectrum of effect when it comes to compensation issues. Natalie Nielsen, Ian and Karen Fraser and Kathleen Henry attended and Ian was a speaker.

Karen Fraser commented that Dr Huntley from the AMA made a passionate and compelling argument in favour of the ex-service community and stated that 8,000 Queensland doctors are 100% behind all veterans to receive a fair go and better medical attention. He stated that DVA deducts 25% from the bill for gold card holders, but Military Compensation pays the whole bill. He hammered DVA in

his 45 minute speech and also stated the AMA believes that partners and carers should receive greater support from DVA, and that they should be looked after by them.

The whole day was recorded and a DVD will be available for us to purchase in the near future. A report on the Forum was written by Natalie and is attached.

Kathleen and Natalie were invited to attend a Panel in Brisbane the following day which prepared a submission to the Minister on the major issues which came out of the Sea of Orange Forum. Kathleen has been requested to go to Canberra with Keith Payne VC and Tracey Zerk – Queensland State Co-ordinator of Sea of Orange, to present the submission.

WORKCOVER QUEENSLAND

Sharon Shin Phat is no longer the Deseal case manager for WorkCover Queensland. WorkCover advises that independent toxicology and psychological testing will be conducted on WorkCover claimants to confirm their effect, therefore members will not be paid until such time as these tests are completed. Jill Patterson advised that she spoke with WorkCover last week and they expect the toxicology to start within the next couple of weeks.

LEGACY

By a show of hands it was agreed that we would only concentrate the Legacy fundraising event at the Logan Hyperdome. Legacy week is 28th August to 2nd September and will be our major fundraiser for the year. It costs approx \$6000 per year to maintain insurances and running costs for the Support Group. Neil (Nobby) Clark has volunteered to be co-ordinator for the event and we ask for as many volunteers as possible to assist. Whatever time you can give – whether two hours or two days, would be greatly appreciated. A couple of hours could enable toilet and meal breaks for our members. We really need your help with this and ask that volunteers please step forward and contact Kathleen at fog@bigpond.net.au or Nobby at nobbyc1@bigpond.net.au as soon as possible.

F-111 RAFFLE

We have a hand made timber F-111 Aircraft on a stand with swing wings and bombs attached. It has been donated as a fundraiser. The floor was thrown open to suggestions on the best way to fundraise and the value of the tickets. Consensus suggested that a raffle among the deseal community be conducted and the agreed value of \$5.00 per ticket was suggested. This aircraft will be raffled over the next three meetings.

(Later note: For those who do not attend meetings, the Committee will arrange a photograph of the Aircraft onto the website and tickets can be ordered through Ian Fraser at Ian.R.Fraser@tpg.com.au The Support Group Bank Account details are on the forum and you can forward Ian your bank receipt with your

name and address and we will issue tickets, or alternatively you can send money orders or cheques to our PO Box 2387 Brisbane 4001.)

DVDs

DVD copies of the Sea of Orange Forum will be available soon with a small charge to cover the cost of DVDs and postage. More information will be forwarded soon.

Stills photographs of the speakers and other attendees of the Sea of Orange Forum have been forwarded to us and will be placed on the website for perusal.

Stills photographs were also taken by John Lakner of the 24th July Meeting with Senator Bishop and Bernie Ripoll and these will also be placed on the website.

PETITION

Kathleen read out a petition from the Partners of Veterans' Association. They are seeking signatures to present a petition to government seeking service carer's be granted a more significant pension and recognition for the billions of dollars they save the government each year in veteran care. Voluntary signatures were requested. The petitions are to be forwarded to NSW by end of August.

If you would like more information or would be interested in obtaining signatures on their behalf from anywhere in Australia, please contact Kathleen at fog@bigpond.net.au

The meeting had a break at 10.45 am to enjoy the refreshments provided by the attendees.

Meeting recommenced at 11am.

SECRETARY

Nominations were called for the position of Secretary. Gordon Dudley reluctantly volunteered when the silence became deafening! This position will only be an interim position until the next Annual General Meeting.

Nominated – Ian Fraser
Seconded – Neil Clark
Motion Carried.

Gordon was then told the bad news that he had to wear a skirt and sit on the President's lap. (Yes we do have lighthearted moments).

GENERAL DISCUSSION

OH&S MEETING TOWNSVILLE

Kathleen has been asked to be keynote speaker at an OH&S Conference for Defence in Townsville later this month. She has been requested to address the personal cost of the deseal issue on her and her family. However, her focus will be that this never ever happens again to another military family. The price is just too high. Although she is speaking about her own personal situation, in her position within the group, she cannot help but include the government, DVA and litigation aspects of the battle for all desealers.

DEPLETED URANIUM

Ian stated that this is still happening and our men and women are being exposed to depleted uranium in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Balkans and here at home. Next year, live firings will be commenced on all our ranges. DU is absolutely genotoxic. It has a 4.5 billion year half life. It has a 1000 mile fall out. Nobody is safe. It does cause birth defects and it does affect sperm. The Gulf War I report by DVA confirms this but then goes on in it's findings to say that the only effect is back injuries from lifting 25lb bombs. Worse still, defence arranged a training program for our troops and it has never been used.

After this discussion, one member came quietly to Ian and stated the military personnel who are shortly going to Iraq have been told they will receive a gold card immediately upon their return.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

The Freedom of information discussion was then raised again, and members encouraged to obtain copies of all medical reports from their own doctors and the DVA specialists. We will have arrange a date in the future to discuss the findings and work out a strategy for the discrepancies.

Cameron Thompson suggested that we take our issues with DVA to the ombudsman to have them corrected.

MEETING NOTICE

John Lakner said that he only became aware of the meeting when Kathleen spoke to him at the Goodna meeting on 27th July. It was not on the forum. Kathleen and several members confirmed that it is on the forum. Ian stated this meeting was a bit ratty because it was originally booked for 23rd July but had to be changed due to a double booking. He will look at having a section on the website for upcoming meeting dates and will place a new Meetings section on the forum.

VOTE OF THANKS

Trevor Wuoti offered a vote of thanks to the whole committee members. Ian responded "we do drop the ball sometimes, but we work for the benefit of all". Thank you to the members.

PRESCRIPTIONS

Trevor advised that each of us would be aware that we currently pay \$4.70 for each prescription for our DVA approved illnesses. If you obtain a print out receipt from your Pharmacist each month and bundle it up for six months and send it to DVA, you will be refunded the \$4.70 for each prescription.

The same applies to the SHOAMP Health Care Scheme but they only allow three months, so send your bill in once per month.

NEXT MEETING

Sunday 29th October will be the next Support Group Meeting. Please annotate it in your diary.

RAFFLE DRAW

The donated prize draw was undertaken and six gifts were dispersed to the attendees.

RSL

Peter Felton highlighted the changes to the RSL building. The new section is complete and the upstairs renovations should be completed in the next few weeks. Peter encouraged all attendees to join this or any other RSL. Ian seconded that and stated that the Queensland Executive has changed and is putting a large broom through the organisation which can only benefit veterans. Ian thanked Peter for the use of the Venue again.

Ian thanked the ladies on the door, Cameron and members for their attendance, and thanked all those who brought a plate to share.

The meeting closed at 11.45am.