



A message from the Minister

INSIDE

News from the
VANZ Medical
desk

Death of a
Veteran and
entitlements after
death

Burial eligibility
extension

War pension rates
to increase

Vietnam Veterans
annual medical
assessment



Hon Michael Woodhouse,
Minister of Veterans' Affairs

It is my aim, whilst I am the Minister of Veterans' Affairs, to ensure that the services currently in place remain flexible and adapt to meet the changing and future needs of the veteran community.

It is a great honour for me to have been asked to take on the Veterans' Affairs portfolio – a portfolio that is very broad and encompasses all issues relating to veterans. This is a special portfolio in that there are a number of different groups of veterans with differing experiences and perspectives. As a consequence, the response to the needs of our veterans can not be generic. It is my aim, whilst I am the Minister of Veterans' Affairs, to ensure that the services currently in place remain flexible and adapt to meet the changing and future needs of the veteran community.

Anniversary Commemorations

The remainder of this year will see the continuation of the commemorative programme currently in place, which allows us to commemorate many significant anniversaries of the First and Second World Wars, and the Korean War. In April 2013, the 98th Anniversary of the Gallipoli Landings will be commemorated in Turkey, Australia and New Zealand; and a delegation of some 80 veterans will travel to Noumea to commemorate the 70th Anniversary of the War in the Pacific, which will also coincide with Anzac Day commemorations. July 2013 will see the return of 30 veterans to the Republic of Korea to commemorate the 60th Anniversary of the Signing of the Korean War Armistice. Planning also continues on events to mark the Centenary of the First World War, including the 100th Anniversary of the Gallipoli Landings in 2015. These events help us to celebrate the service and commemorate the sacrifice of so many New Zealanders.

Law Commission Review

Good progress continues to be made on the Government's response to the Law Commission's Review of the War Pensions Act 1954. This has been a major project based on the Law Commission's proposal to replace the current legislation and the recommendation that significant change be made to the administrative and decision-making processes to update and modernise the legislation. In October 2012, the Government committed a \$60 million package over the next five years to implement the new legislation, which will incorporate 132 of the 170 recommendations from the Law Commission Review. As your Minister, I am fully committed to ensuring the changes meet the needs of all our veterans.

Services to Veterans

It is important that as veterans, you feel you are able to discuss any issues and concerns you may have freely and openly, especially in relation to services you may be receiving. Significant improvement has been made over the last couple of years to ensure information about entitlements and services for the veteran community is obtainable and easily understood. The Case Management in the Community initiative continues to provide a vehicle by which veterans can interact with Veterans' Affairs case managers to discuss services available to them and raise any issues as a result.

Again, it is indeed an honour and a privilege to have this portfolio. As the Minister of Veterans' Affairs, I will always be interested in hearing your views and I hope to meet as many of you as possible during the coming months.

CONTRIBUTIONS FOR
VANZ NEWS
ARE TO BE POSTED TO:
THE EDITOR
P.O. BOX 5146
WELLINGTON 6145
OR EMAILED TO:
VETERANS@XTRA.CO.NZ



Veteran Mr Maurice Abrahams with RNZAF Medic CPL Russell Cowling departing for the 70th Anniversary of the Battle of El Alamein, Egypt.

NEWS FROM THE VANZ MEDICAL DESK

In this issue of VANZ News, we introduce what will become a regular feature by the VANZ Medical Adviser, Doctor Anne Campbell

Medical Clearance Process for Veterans attending Commemorative Events Overseas

There have been three significant government funded overseas commemorations in past months; 70th Anniversary of the Fall of Singapore (February 2012); Unveiling and Dedication of the Bomber Command Memorial in London (June 2012); and the 70th Anniversary of the Battle of El Alamein (October 2012). VANZ is in the process of final arrangements for those veterans attending the 70th Anniversary of the War in the Pacific, in Noumea, in April 2013. It is timely that I have this opportunity to advise all veterans of the medical clearance process that is undertaken to determine if veterans are medically fit to undertake these journeys.

Travelling is something we all thoroughly enjoy as New Zealanders and we do with relative ease, when well and youthful.

When travelling internationally, we must deal with time zone changes, different climates, a change in foods, and environmental hazards such as disease-carrying insects. Travelling when aged comes with risks, especially that of mobility and falls. We certainly acknowledge that most of our older veterans are remarkable for their age. But we must still ensure we do not place the health of any of our veterans at risk when undertaking overseas travel.

As part of the medical clearance process, veterans are expected to see their own General Practitioner (GP) – this is the person who knows you best in terms of completing the necessary medical examination. The more information your GP provides in terms of your overall health, including how you go about your independent daily living, the easier it is for the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) medical team to make the decision regarding your fitness to travel.

Veterans must be able to function independently. Being able to walk independently up to 500 metres is vital. Experience to date has shown

us that if you can not walk 500 metres independently, you will struggle. Veterans with chronic obstructive airways disease are very prone to getting worse with travel, especially air travel. Blood tests and an ECG (heart tracing) are essential as a baseline in case you are admitted to a foreign hospital.

The commemorative programme is designed to go at your speed and allow for rest where the medical care and support team see the need. But in saying this, the days are full and we are taking you from your usual routine of daily life in New Zealand.

We always appreciate feedback from those who have been on our commemorative journeys and feedback can be provided by email to veterans@xtra.co.nz.

For those who are yet to undertake a commemorative journey overseas, we look forward to meeting and supporting you in the future. The wartime experiences you share throughout the journey add to the success of these commemorative trips and bring a reality of what happened to you during your overseas service.

DEATH OF A VETERAN AND ENTITLEMENTS AFTER DEATH

War Disablement Pension (WDP)

A WDP is only payable to a veteran. Once a veteran passes away VANZ must be notified as soon as possible, so that the WDP payments can be stopped. This is in order to prevent a large overpayment and a debt which will need to be recovered from the estate of the veteran.

War Funeral Grant (WFG)

A WFG may be granted if the:

- death of a veteran is attributable to qualifying service; or
- veteran was in receipt of a Veterans Pension (VP), Invalid's Benefit or New Zealand Superannuation (an income test applies to recipients of New Zealand Superannuation) and is survived by a spouse or partner entitled to a Surviving Spouse Pension or dependent children entitled to a Child Pension.

A WFG is paid if there are any funeral expenses that have not been met by another government agency.

Veterans Pension (VP)

When a veteran, who is in receipt of a VP and is ordinarily resident in New Zealand, passes away the spouse, partner or dependent children are entitled to a lump sum payment. When a spouse or partner, who is in receipt of a VP and is ordinarily resident in New Zealand, passes away the veteran is entitled to a lump sum payment. This is administered by the Ministry of Social Development's Veterans Pension Centre. For queries regarding this, please

contact 0800 650 656 from within New Zealand.

Surviving Spouse Pension (SSP)

A spouse or partner may be eligible for an SSP if:

- a veteran's death is found to be attributable to service; or
- a veteran was in receipt of a permanent War Disablement Pension of 70 per cent or more when they passed away; or
- an assessment of medical evidence determines that a veteran could have been in receipt of a permanent War Disablement Pension of 70 per cent or more when they passed away.

To qualify, the Secretary for War Pensions must be satisfied that a marriage, civil union or de facto relationship exists at the time the veteran passes away. A spouse or partner may not qualify for a SSP if the relationship had been in place for one year or less.

If the spouse or partner enters into a new relationship their entitlement to a SSP ends. Payments may be continued for up to two years or an equivalent lump sum payment may be made. Therefore, it is important that a spouse or partner advises VANZ when a new relationship commences.

Parents Allowance (PA)

A PA may be paid to a surviving spouse or partner who has at least one dependant child of the veteran in his or her care. If eligible, the PA may be paid until the child reaches age 16. A PA

may be granted or continue to be paid in respect of an older child to assist in furthering the education of the child or if the child suffers from physical or mental infirmity.

Child's Pension (CP)

A CP may be paid to the child or children of a deceased veteran. A CP is paid until a child turns 16. A CP may be granted or continue to be paid to an older child to assist in furthering the education of the child or if the child suffers from physical or mental infirmity.

With the exception of the WFG, pensions and allowances are paid on a fortnightly basis (monthly if paid to an overseas bank account). These are tax free, and are adjusted with the Consumer Price Index on 1 April each year.

Keeping in touch with Veterans' Affairs New Zealand

Please tell us as soon as you

- Change your address
- Change your bank account
- Change your marital status
- Plan to go overseas to live
- Move to a rest home or hospital
- Have someone come to live with you

In the sad event of your death

- your family or the executor of your estate needs to tell us as soon as you pass away
- your partner or family may have some entitlements, ie
 - a funeral grant
 - a memorial plaque or headstone for your grave in a public or private cemetery
 - you may be receiving help that needs to be cancelled or reassessed
- your pension will be paid until the date of your death; if it is not stopped immediately after your death it can quickly build up a debt that your estate will have to repay

We suggest you leave this note with your Will or personal papers so the person looking after your affairs knows to get in touch with us.

BURIAL ELIGIBILITY EXTENSION

The Minister of Veterans' Affairs, Hon Michael Woodhouse, recently extended the eligibility criteria for burial in a services cemetery to Vietnam veterans who served in 41 Squadron RNZAF and the civilian surgical teams, from December 1972 to 21 April 1975.

"This was done to correct an anomaly, by which the cut off date for eligible Vietnam veterans to be buried in a services cemetery was aligned to the withdrawal of army units from Vietnam in December 1972," said Mr Woodhouse.

"This situation however was unfair to those members, particularly 41 Squadron RNZAF and the medical teams that continued to operate in Vietnam until 21 April 1975, just before the fall of Saigon," added the Minister.

This situation was highlighted to the Minister by a constituent. Veterans' Affairs New Zealand investigated the issue and after consultation with the RNZRSA and the Minister of Defence, the Minister decided to extend the eligibility.

For more information regarding eligibility for burial in a services cemetery, please feel free to contact VANZ on Freephone 0800 483 8372 or 64 4 495 2070, or by email to veterans@xtra.co.nz

Veterans' Affairs New Zealand
ph 0800 483 8372 in NZ
ph +64 4 495 2070 from overseas
email veterans@xtra.co.nz

WAR PENSION RATES TO INCREASE

On 1 April 2013, War Disablement Pension and Surviving Spouse Pension rates will increase by 0.61% in line with the Annual Consumer Price Index, plus an additional 5% as announced by Government in October 2012.

WAR DISABLEMENT PENSIONS: WEEKLY RATES FROM 1 APRIL 2013

(a) Ordinary Rates	
Disablement	Weekly Rate \$
Percentage	New
5%	10.70
10%	21.40
15%	32.10
20%	42.80
25%	53.50
30%	64.20
35%	74.90
40%	85.60
45%	96.30
50%	107.00
55%	117.70
60%	128.40
65%	139.10
70%	149.80
75%	160.50
80%	171.20
85%	181.90
90%	192.60
95%	203.30
100%	214.00

(b) Rates for those with Severe Disablement	
Disablement	Weekly Rate \$
Percentage	New
105%	224.70
110%	235.40
115%	246.10
120%	256.80
125%	267.50
130%	278.20
135%	288.90
140%	299.60
145%	310.30
150%	321.00
155%	331.70
160%	342.40

(c) Rates for those with Severe Disablement: Aged 60 Years and over	
Disablement	Weekly Rate \$
Percentage	New
105%	247.17
110%	258.94
115%	270.71
120%	282.48
125%	294.25
130%	306.02
135%	317.79
140%	329.56
145%	341.33
150%	353.10
155%	364.87
160%	376.64

Note: War Pensions are not subject to income tax.

Note: Those with severe disablement aged 60 years and over receive an additional 10% of their pension.

(d) Surviving Spouse Pension	
Surviving Spouse Pension	157.86

VIETNAM VETERANS ANNUAL MEDICAL ASSESSMENT (AMA)

The main purpose of the AMA is to assess the general health and well-being of Vietnam veterans. The medical assessment is also to ensure detection of recognised long term health effects of exposure to the toxic environment that existed in Vietnam. If you have any concerns about your current health status, you should raise them with your medical practitioner at the time of the assessment.

Your medical practitioner will discuss your current medical issues and list these on your AMA form. Following the examination by your medical practitioner, he or she may require you to have pathology, radiology or other investigations depending on your current health issue. Further investigations should be discussed with your case manager where any costs are involved. If you do not have a case manager, one will be assigned to you when you contact us.

If you have any queries about the AMA please contact your case manager or call the VANZ Enquiry Line on Freephone 0800 483 8372 or 64 4 495 2070.

UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS

May 20: 72nd anniversary of the Battle of Crete

July 27: 60th anniversary of the Korean War Armistice

