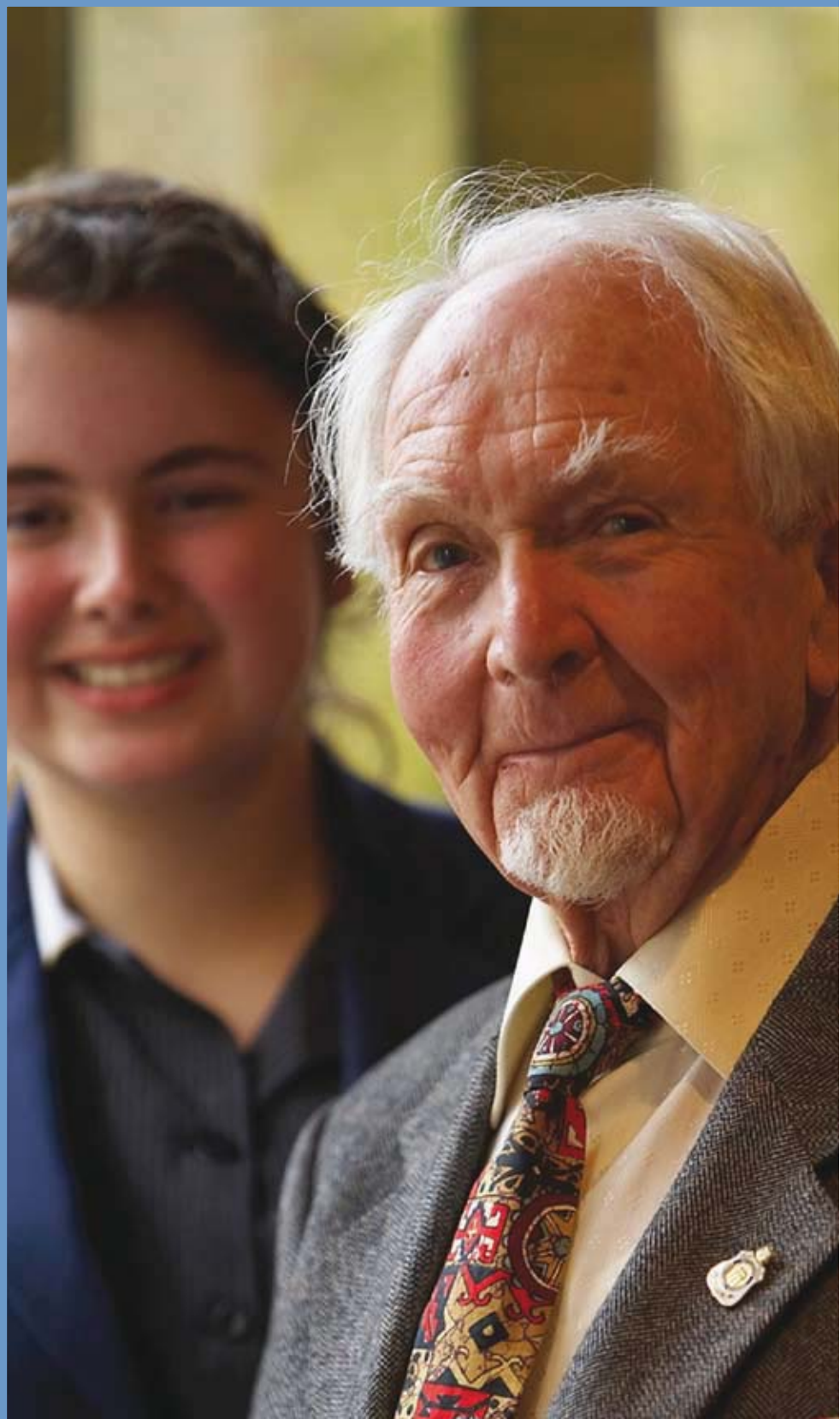
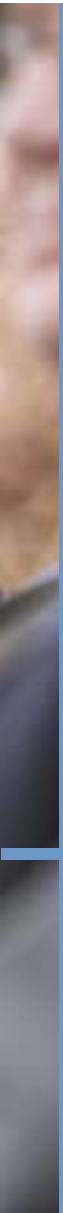


VICTORIAN VETERANS SECTOR STUDY REPORT

VICTORIAN VETERANS COUNCIL
JUNE 2008







IMPORTANT NOTICE – PLEASE READ

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June 2008

LETTER TO THE PREMIER

June 2008

The Hon. John Brumby, MP
Premier of Victoria
Minister for Veteran Affairs
1 Treasury Place, Melbourne VIC 3000

Dear Premier

I am pleased to present the Report of the Victorian Veterans Council on the Victorian Veterans Sector Study.

The Report identifies the issues confronting the veterans sector in Victoria and recommends proposed actions to address these issues.

The Report addresses all matters covered by the terms of reference and provides an overview of the veterans sector in Victoria, the main changes and challenges affecting it, and key areas of concern for veterans, war widows and their dependants. The Council has also sought to look ahead at the challenges through to 2015, to identify key issues relating to the role and capacity of the sector, and the needs of the veteran community. The Report also considers some actions to help prepare our state to participate in events to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Gallipoli Campaign.

The Victorian Veterans Council managed the study through a Steering Group that included representatives from the Returned and Services League, Legacy, Carry On, the Commonwealth Department of Veterans' Affairs and the Department of Human Services.

Acknowledging that most areas of veterans' health and aged care support are the responsibility of the Commonwealth Government, the focus of the Study has been on those areas that are legitimately the responsibility of the Victorian Government, either exclusively or in partnership with the Commonwealth. The Council has looked especially at issues concerning:

- the effects of the ageing veteran population
- the capacity of ex-service organisations to deliver services; or to evolve, merge or nominate a successor organisation
- confusion around the use of patriotic funds
- increasing the funds directed to the ANZAC Day Proceeds Fund
- veterans' health, well-being and access to services
- public education about Australia's war-time experiences
- veteran related heritage
- support to the Shrine of Remembrance
- ways in which state and federal governments can work more closely, particularly in relation to accommodation support, and communication and information about services.

The Council has made 11 recommendations.

In summary, the first set of recommendations is aimed at supporting ex-service organisations (ESOs) to sustain operations and build capacity, or if they choose to, supporting them to merge with like-minded organisations, or to dissolve operations. The Victorian Government can take action to provide clear information and advice about matters such as using patriotic funds, protecting veteran-related heritage, the legal aspects of closing operations, engaging younger veterans, and modernising volunteer management practices. There is scope for the Veterans Council to manage the implementation of these measures in partnership with some of the larger ESOs. It is also proposed that the ANZAC Day Proceeds Fund be increased to assist with the delivery of welfare services to an ageing veteran population.

The second set of recommendations is aimed at enhancing the wellbeing of veterans and war widows and improving their access to appropriate housing, transport options, health and aged care services. Proposed actions include expanding existing opportunities for social engagement, offering subsidised taxi fares for all veterans over 70 years of age, and addressing any anomalies relating to the municipal rates in Victoria, and transport concessions.

The third set of recommendations is aimed at responding to the increasing community interest in Australia's war-time history. Proposed measures include strengthening the role of the Shrine of Remembrance as Victoria's pre-eminent war memorial and venue for commemoration and community education; the development of curriculum materials to support teachers delivering Australian history and ESO presentations in schools; and capturing the personal stories of veterans, as well as the histories of their military units, in a digital format – making these available on an interactive website.

The final recommendation is aimed at improving collaboration, coordination, communication and information across the sector and with other sectors by holding appropriate forums and encouraging joint investment opportunities, such as Victorian Government support of the 28 Veteran Support Centres located across the state.

The Veterans Council believes that this Report and its recommendations will enable the Victorian Government to respond appropriately to the changing needs of Victoria's ageing veteran population, and lead to more accessible services and programs and a stronger and even more socially valuable veterans' sector.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who contributed to the work of the Council and who participated in such an open and positive manner. I would also like to acknowledge the excellent work of the Department of Planning and Community Development who provided administrative support for the study and the writing of the Report.

Thanks are also due to the individual members of the Steering Group and to the secretariat staff who worked diligently to support this project. I look forward to the Victorian Government's response and to supporting the Government in tackling the challenges ahead.

Major General Peter Haddad, AO (Retd)
Chairman Victorian Veterans Council



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Peter Haddad". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

AT A GLANCE

OUR VETERANS

– THE BIG PICTURE

- Veterans are an important part of our community who deserve the best possible support from Government.
- The veteran community is inclusive of veterans, war widows, spouses and dependants. The term veteran is inclusive of those who have or have not experienced operational service, peacemakers and peacekeepers, reservists, and national servicemen.
- As at 31 December 2007, the Commonwealth Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) estimated there were 93,000 veterans, war widows and dependants in Victoria in receipt of DVA pensions, allowances and/or health care. There are also a significant number of veterans in Victoria, who do not receive DVA benefits.
- The DVA estimates that approximately 30,000 World War II veterans live in Victoria, 17,200 of whom are in receipt of DVA services and benefits. As of March 2008, their average age is 85.7 years.
- Vietnam veterans are the second biggest group of veterans after World War II veterans, with 8,446 Vietnam veterans living in Victoria. As of March 2007, 5,456 Vietnam veterans in Victoria were on a DVA disability pension.
- In 2007 there were 1,551 Korean War veterans living in Victoria. Other smaller veteran contingents served in the Far East Strategic Reserve (FESR), the Malayan Emergency and the Indonesian Confrontation. Nearly all veterans from these conflicts are now on a disability pension.

EX-SERVICE ORGANISATIONS

- The Returned and Services League (RSL) is the largest and most prominent ex-service organisation (ESO) in Victoria and Australia. As at May 2008, total RSL state membership grew slightly to 61,750 (an increase of 2.6% in the past two years). This figure includes 34,537 service members, 1,914 life members and 25,299 affiliate members. The growth is due to increases in affiliate membership.
- Other ESOs in Victoria with a large membership or asset base include Legacy, Carry On (Victoria), Royal Australian Airforce Association, The Naval Association of Australia, Peacemakers and Peacekeepers Veterans Association, Vietnam Veterans associations, Totally and Permanently Disabled Soldiers Association of Victoria Inc, Defence Force Welfare Association, National Servicemen's Association of Australia and ESOs representing war widows and widowed mothers.
- The veterans' sector relies almost entirely on the tireless work of thousands of volunteers each year. The majority of these volunteers are themselves veterans. Without these volunteers, the sector would not be able to operate effectively.
- ESOs finance their activities through fundraising efforts, bequests, membership subscriptions, government grants and where applicable, patriotic funds.
- Patriotic funds are ESO trust funds (including money, securities and property) raised by the ex-service community to be used for a patriotic purpose. A patriotic purpose is defined in the Veterans Act 2005 as being for the relief, assistance or support of serving or ex-service personnel or their dependants, or for the purchase, maintenance and refurbishment of club rooms for the use of ex-service personnel.
- Victoria's ex-service organisations (ESOs) are facing a number of issues impacting on their future viability, including an inability to retain and recruit the required level of volunteers, difficulty engaging younger veterans, and service delivery difficulties.
- The small ESOs that support specific groups of World War II veterans will inevitably close operations over the next five to ten years as their members age and decline in numbers. The RSL Victorian Branch predicts that four or five smaller RSL sub-branches will also close or amalgamate, particularly those in rural areas with members who are mainly World War II veterans.

VETERANS' NEEDS AND CONCERNS

- Veterans identified access to quality health and aged care services, and facilities for crisis accommodation and high-care needs, as being critical concerns for their ageing population. Access to nursing home beds and capital improvements to nursing home facilities in need of repair were also high priorities.
- Social isolation is an issue for ageing veterans, as their social networks diminish with the passing of friends and spouses. Veterans in poor health and/or who lose their drivers' licence find it difficult to get out and about. This is particularly the case for veterans living in rural Victoria.
- Many veterans rely on public transport in the course of their everyday lives. Veterans are concerned about access, as well as safety. Access is especially an issue in rural and regional areas, and in Melbourne's outer metropolitan area, where fewer public transport services are available. Many veterans are affected by anomalies in concession arrangements across local, state and federal government jurisdictions.
- Veterans, ESOs and the wider community have become increasingly aware that as the veteran population ages, objects and items that document Australia's service history need to be better identified, protected and displayed.
- Many veterans are concerned about the sustainability of commemoration ceremonies and events. As some of the smaller ESOs in rural and regional towns close their operations, it is unclear who will organise the annual commemoration activities, or how these events, so important to the state's communities, will be patronised.
- Veterans believe that public education programs are important to ensure that younger generations understand the history and the sacrifices made by earlier generations.
- Access to information is a critical issue for Victoria's veterans and their organisations. A more comprehensive approach to communication across the veterans' sector will be needed for the identified challenges in this Report.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this Report is to provide the Victorian Government with an overview of the state's veteran community and the challenges it faces, and identify areas for government action.

The Report is a result of the Victorian Veterans' Sector Study, which has been guided and managed by the Victorian Veterans Council, an independent statutory body established in 2006 under the *Veterans Act 2005*.

The study's methodology included three key components: a survey distributed to ex-service organisations (ESOs), a series of focus group discussions with veterans across Victoria, and a desktop literature review of relevant research.

The survey was sent to 25 Victorian ESOs for their specific responses to questions about challenges facing younger and older veterans and their organisations, and their plans and ideas for the future. The focus groups encompassed the broader veteran community, including veterans who may or may not belong to an ex-service organisation, their dependants, and service providers.

Most ESOs reported a decline in their member numbers, mainly due to the ageing veteran population. This is of great concern, given the veterans' sector relies almost entirely on the work of volunteers each year. These volunteers support a wide range of ESO activities: they sit on committees; support welfare, hospital visits, social and fundraising efforts; host commemoration and education activities – to name a few.

To support veterans to continue their vital work in the community, the Victorian Government and other key stakeholders will need to address some critical challenges. These include helping ESOs to stay viable; integrating health and welfare service delivery; supporting public education programs and commemoration activities; and improving the delivery of information about services available to veterans.

HELPING EX-SERVICE ORGANISATIONS TO STAY VIABLE

Victoria's ESOs are facing some key viability issues including an inability to retain and recruit the required number of volunteers to sustain their operations, difficulty engaging younger veterans, and service delivery challenges.

We recognise these issues are not unique to the veterans' sector and are faced by many not-for-profit organisations in general.

Many ESOs are making the required adjustments and new partnerships are being forged between like-minded organisations. In addition, ESOs are looking for ways to involve not only younger veterans, but also younger people to help maintain services.

However, some smaller ESOs don't know how to deal with issues such as modernising their volunteering practices, or where to seek advice. They need to know how to access available government support, and learn from the good-practice examples of other ESOs.

The Veterans Council recommends the Victorian Government establish a comprehensive approach to assist ESOs to sustain and/or develop their operations.

SERVICE DELIVERY CHALLENGES

With the reduction in volunteer numbers comes a reduced capacity for ESOs to independently sustain their fundraising operations. This has obvious implications for their provision of welfare, education and advocacy services. Gaps in service provision are emerging, particularly in regional areas.

In terms of specific funding for ESO service delivery in Victoria, ESOs are able to apply for an allocation of the ANZAC Day Proceeds Fund through the Veterans Council for welfare purposes. This Fund is derived from money raised at sporting events on ANZAC Day, including \$25,000 from the annual AFL ANZAC Day match.

Broader funding opportunities are also available through various Victorian Government programs, although veterans have been historically reluctant to access these unless they are packaged and targeted specifically for veterans. However, many ESOs are now recognising the need to look more widely for funding opportunities.

ESOs and all levels of government need to work together to improve the delivery of services to veterans. Statewide mapping of service-delivery gaps would help create a better picture of what services are available and to whom, and aid plans for more integrated services.

The Veterans Council recommends the Victorian Government improves the coordination of state-based services available to the veteran community, and reviews the ANZAC Day Proceeds Fund to more effectively support ESOs in their provision of veterans' welfare.

PRESERVING VETERAN-RELATED HERITAGE

Veterans, ESOs and the wider community have become increasingly aware that as the veteran population ages, objects and items that document Australia's service history need to be better identified, protected and displayed.

Veterans' heritage includes, but is not limited to, war memorials, community halls, avenues of honour, veterans' heritage trails, former colonial and Commonwealth defence-force sites, memorial plantings, memorabilia and the personal collections of veterans and their families.

The Victorian Government has made a substantial contribution towards the preservation of veteran-related heritage by establishing the Veterans Heritage Working Group. The group's first task has been to initiate the Veteran Related Heritage Survey to identify and list veteran heritage, look at current management and protection arrangements, consider opportunities for improving protection (as required), and examine risks, funding opportunities and options for cataloguing.

The Veterans Council believes that given that the work of the Veterans Heritage Working Group is still underway, there is no need for any other Victorian Government action at this stage. Further action may be required to assist the Working Group to implement any recommendations made to improve the care and preservation of veteran-related heritage.

PATRIOTIC FUNDS (ESO TRUST FUNDS) REGULATION AND ADVICE

Regulated by the *Veterans Act 2005*, a patriotic fund is 'any fund raised wholly or in part – by private or public subscriptions, collections or contributions'.

Many veterans and ESOs are unclear about how they can use patriotic funds. Some of this confusion relates to whether funds can be used for contemporary welfare purposes, such as employing paid staff to perform services that volunteers once performed; and whether 'welfare' funds can be used to maintain buildings, and whether 'building' funds can be used for welfare support. Some ESOs are also unclear about whether membership fees are subject to the same regulation as patriotic funds.

Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) regulates the use of patriotic funds under the Act and provides advice about their use and management. A dedicated officer is available to answer queries, manage applications and transactions and any follow-up required.

The Veterans Council recommends the Victorian Government supports patriotic fund holders and the veteran community to better understand patriotic funds and their use, as appropriate under the *Veterans Act 2005*.

ORGANISATIONS DECIDING TO CLOSE OR MERGE

Some smaller ESOs are deciding to close operations because they are unable to recruit new volunteers to deliver services, their members are ageing and numbers declining, and they find it difficult to attract younger veterans.

Some ESOs want to merge with like-minded organisations, but they don't know how to manage the process or where to seek support. Sometimes they are 'in denial' about the need to begin the process of transition.

The significant consequences are that many ESOs will not close properly and the assets and resources accumulated over many years may be lost.

Some of the larger ESOs are giving advice to their branches/sub-branches about closures and mergers. However, further support from the Victorian Government would help ensure all ESOs are receiving the help they need.

The Veterans Council recommends the Victorian Government supports ESO succession planning by providing access to information and professional advice on how to manage the legal, financial and other practical aspects of the process.

VETERANS' HEALTH AND AGED CARE NEEDS

Health and welfare support for veterans is primarily the responsibility of the Commonwealth Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA). The Victorian Government plays a smaller but complementary role in this, particularly as a provider of health and aged care services. As such, a number of the recommendations seek to better integrate government services at all levels.

Veterans have multiple and complex needs, and although DVA recipients receive a good level of care, it is important to remember that not all veterans and widows are DVA recipients.

The Veterans Council believes a large range of remedial health and aged care measures are already in place through the Commonwealth and State government programs. Therefore no specific new action is required by the Victorian Government at this stage.

ACCOMMODATION

There is a lack of medium to long term crisis accommodation for the small number of veterans with high and complex needs. Crisis accommodation services are supported under Commonwealth/state funding arrangements, but veterans do not receive priority access and are forced to wait along with other individuals in need.

Access for younger ex-service men and women, and the disabled children of veterans to specialist disability care and support, including residential and in-home care services, is also limited under current Commonwealth/state funding arrangements. Veterans also do not have priority access.

In seeking to provide accommodation for veterans with special needs, the small number of ESOs that operate care facilities in Victoria will need further support.

The Veterans Council recommends the Victorian Government, with the Commonwealth Government and ESOs, address the accommodation needs of the state's veterans, war widows and their dependants

SOCIAL ISOLATION

Social isolation is a critical issue for ageing veterans, as their social networks diminish with the passing of friends and spouses. Veterans in poor health and/or who lose their drivers' licence find it difficult to get out and about. This is particularly the case for veterans living in rural Victoria.

Many ESOs offer social activities and visitation services to house or hospital-bound veterans. However, due to the declining numbers and ageing of volunteers, it is a challenge for ESOs to maintain these services at the time they are most in need.

Broader Victorian Government community-networking programs aimed at seniors, such as the popular Men's Sheds, have the potential to fill this gap. Many veterans are not aware of these programs, which means a more targeted approach to involving them is required.

The Veterans Council recommends the Victorian Government strengthens its effort to address the social isolation of older people, particularly older veterans and war widows, and facilitates access to Neighbourhood Houses, Men's Sheds and other similar community organisations.

MOBILITY

Being able to do everyday activities and stay part of the wider community are vital for veterans' well-being and social connectedness. Many veterans are now in their eighties and can no longer drive a car. The quality of life for these veterans is severely reduced if no viable transport alternatives exist.

Many veterans in rural, regional and outer metropolitan areas of the state are unclear about what transport options are available, and where transport is lacking, or who to approach to address the issue.

A number of Victorian Government initiatives to improve the mobility of elderly and disabled people are already in place, such as Transport Connections, a program helping communities work together to improve local transport, and the Multi Purpose Taxi Program for people with severe and permanent disabilities.

At this stage, the veteran community is not represented on any of the 30 Transport Connections committees across Victoria. There are opportunities to link veterans into this initiative and others that are underway.

The Veterans Council recommends the Victorian Government improves the veteran community's access to broader community transport options, specifically helping ESOs who provide community transport to link with other community transport providers at a local level.

CONCESSIONS/RECIPROCAL TRANSPORT ARRANGEMENTS

Some veterans are affected by anomalies in concession arrangements, and others are less certain about what kinds of concessions apply across local, state and Commonwealth government jurisdictions.

As an example, one such anomaly is that an ex-prisoner of war (who is eligible for a DVA Gold Card) is ineligible for the municipal rates concession. However, if the ex-prisoner of war dies, his widow becomes eligible for the concession as she is automatically entitled to the War Widows Gold Card from DVA – which entitles her to the municipal rates concession.

Confusion around which concessions apply is exacerbated by the fact that at a local government level, some councils have provided discretionary concessions to veterans. This has led to a view that these arrangements could be applied either across states or nationally.

Another matter of concern to veterans is the need for reciprocal transport arrangements between state governments. This relates to the concessions available in each state and territory for veterans when accessing public transport.

The Veterans Council recommends the Victorian Government addresses existing anomalies in relation to veterans' concessions and supports consistent eligibility for concessions across Australian states and territories.

COMMEMORATION ACTIVITIES AND PUBLIC EDUCATION

Commemoration activities such as an ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day services are held throughout Victoria each year. The RSL organises Melbourne's annual ANZAC Day parade and commemoration services. The Victorian Government and the City of Melbourne each provide \$50,000 to the RSL to stage these activities.

In addition, many commemoration services are held in rural and regional towns around the state. Even though the smaller ESOs in these towns may eventually need to wind up operations, the annual commemoration events so important to these communities need not be compromised. 'Friends of the RSL' is an excellent model for retaining commemorative activities once an ESO has wound up operations.

The Shrine of Remembrance is the state's primary venue for commemoration of the service and sacrifice of Victorians and the ANZAC spirit. More than 120 commemorative ceremonies are held at the Shrine each year.

The Shrine also delivers a curriculum-based education program to Victorian schoolchildren annually. It is delivered largely through the Shrine's annual fundraising initiatives and is strategically linked to the Shrine's commemoration role, exhibition and public programs.

It is timely to strengthen the Victorian Government's policy framework that recognises the important role of the Shrine of Remembrance both now and into the future (in terms of education, commemoration, and any expanded function). The Shrine's current business model will also need to be reviewed, with the aim to establish a more sustainable model to meet current and future operational demands.

Veterans have observed that successful education initiatives are already in place, such as the Victorian Spirit of ANZAC Prize, but would like to see a more comprehensive ANZAC program integrated into the school curriculum. There is also an opportunity to raise awareness about the ANZAC Centenary in 2015 through the various education programs in place.

The Veterans Council recommends the Victorian Government strengthens its current education programs to inform the community about the contribution of veterans in their service to the nation, with new initiatives in the lead up to the Centenary of ANZAC in 2015.

The Veterans Council also recommends the Victorian Government takes action to strengthen the role of the Shrine of Remembrance.

VETERAN-SERVICES INFORMATION DELIVERY

Access to information is a critical issue for Victoria's veterans and their organisations. In fact, a more comprehensive approach to communication across the veterans' sector will be needed for the identified challenges in this Report to be adequately addressed.

There are three types of information and communication challenges for the veteran community. The first relates to the difficulty individual veterans face to learn about what services are available to them through ESOs and governments. The second relates to communication of information, sharing of ideas and examples of good practice between ESOs. The third relates to the difficulty ESOs experience in discovering what opportunities and services exist to support them, beyond what is on offer through DVA.

ESO's as well as local, state and Commonwealth government agencies offering support have different mechanisms for communicating their services to the community. Some of this information is available on respective agency websites, booklets, through a telephone service, or by provision of staffed 'shop fronts' open to the public.

There is an opportunity to create a 'single point of entry' to communicate the range of services on offer to the veteran community in Victoria.

The Veterans Council recommends the Victorian Government take action to improve the knowledge and understanding of the veteran community about available programs and services to support the needs of veterans and their dependants.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Council's Recommendation to the Victorian Government	Suggested Approach or Initiative
<p>1. The Veteran Council recommends the Victorian Government establish a comprehensive approach to assist ex-service organisations (ESOs) to sustain and/or develop their operations.</p>	<p>A. In partnership with ESOs, the Veterans Council develops an information package on available 'capacity building' grant programs. It would include case studies of good practice, tips on modernising volunteer opportunities, and engaging younger veterans. It would also include commonly asked questions and answers relating to managing transitions.</p>
<p>2. The Veteran Council recommends the Victorian Government co-ordinate State-based services available to the veteran community, and review the ANZAC Day Proceeds Fund to more effectively support ESOs in their provision of veterans' welfare.</p>	<p>A. The Veterans Council, in partnership with ESOs, undertakes a statewide mapping and analysis of ESO and government services.</p> <p>B. The Victorian Government explores avenues for increasing the capacity of the ANZAC Day Proceeds Fund. This may require reviewing the <i>ANZAC Day Act 1958</i>.</p> <p>C. The Veterans Council reviews guidelines in which the ANZAC Day Proceeds Fund could be more effectively targeted to support the welfare needs of veterans.</p>
<p>3. The Veteran Council recommends the Victorian Government support patriotic fund holders and the veteran community to better understand patriotic funds and their use as appropriate under the <i>Veterans Act 2005</i>.</p>	<p>A. The Veterans Council, in partnership with Consumer Affairs Victoria and key ESOs, develops an information booklet, including questions and answers on how patriotic funds can be raised and appropriately used, and case studies on how funds are being used for contemporary welfare purposes.</p> <p>B. The Veterans Council, in partnership with Consumer Affairs Victoria, conduct regular information sessions on the management and reporting requirements for patriotic funds.</p> <p>C. The Victorian Government considers a review of the <i>Veterans Act 2005</i> to ensure there are no legislative barriers to improved flexibility, such as the ability to transfer monies between funds.</p>

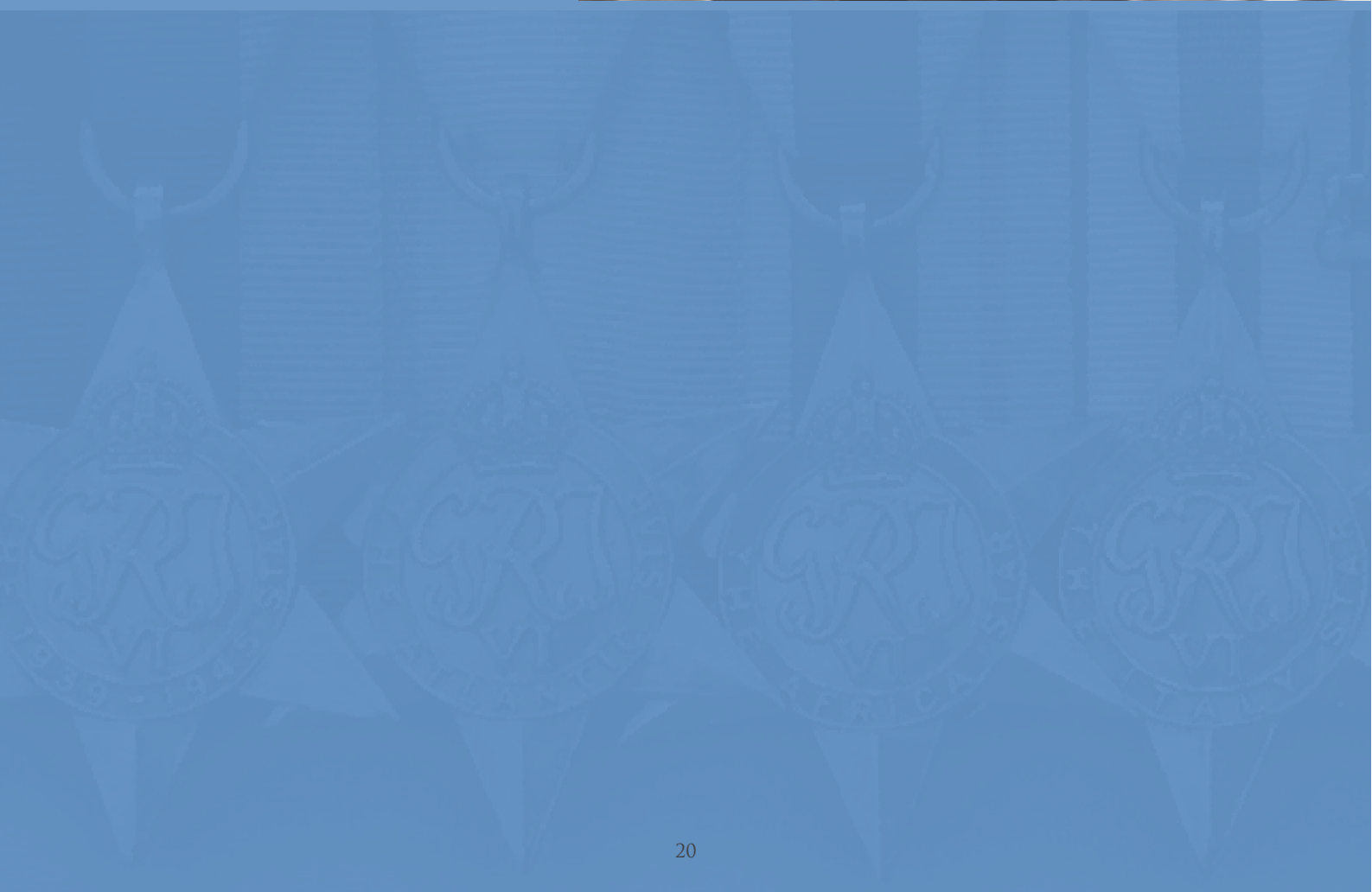
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Council's Recommendation to the Victorian Government	Suggested Approach or Initiative
<p>4. The Veteran Council recommends the Victorian Government support ESO succession planning by providing access to information and professional advice on how to manage the legal, financial and other practical aspects of the process.</p>	<p>A. The Veterans Council develops an information booklet about the options available to ESOs for managing succession. This would include advice and guidance on the necessary steps to implement their preferred course of action, and cover matters such as managing memorabilia, and merging or dissolving funds. Case studies of good practice, such as Friends of the RSL, would also be included.</p> <p>B. The Veterans Council is given resources to work with CAV to ensure ESOs have access to professional advice when dissolving patriotic funds.</p>
<p>5. The Veteran Council recommends the Victorian Government, with the Commonwealth Government and ESOs, address the accommodation needs of the state's veterans, war widows and their dependants.</p>	<p>A. The Victorian Government partners with the Commonwealth Government and ESOs to ensure specialist housing is available for the disabled children of veterans and address the accommodation needs of younger and older veterans, war widows and dependants.</p>
<p>6. The Veteran Council recommends the Victorian Government strengthen its effort to address the social isolation of older people, particularly older veterans and war widows, and facilitates access to Neighbourhood Houses, Men's Sheds and other similar community organisations.</p>	<p>A. The Victorian Government specifically targets veterans for involvement in Men's Sheds, and ensures transportation is available when required.</p> <p>B. The Victorian Government provides opportunities for older veterans to engage and socialise in a range of settings. This would include providing a focus for veterans in the annual Seniors Week festival and at senior citizen centres and clubs across the state.</p>

Council's Recommendation to the Victorian Government	Suggested Approach or Initiative
<p>7. The Veteran Council recommends the Victorian Government improve the veteran community's access to broader community transport options, specifically helping ESOs who provide community transport to link with other community transport providers at a local level.</p>	<p>A. The Victorian Government expands the Multi Purpose Taxi Program to provide access to all veterans and war widows from the age of 70. This would be in line with the Commonwealth Government's provision of Gold Cards to all veterans from the age of 70 with qualifying service.</p>
	<p>B. The Department of Planning and Community Development includes veteran representation on each of the 30 Transport Connections committees across Victoria and ensures the veteran community gains access to transport assets.</p>
	<p>C. The Veterans Council promotes the Commonwealth's Mobility Allowance to ESOs.</p>
<p>8. The Veteran Council recommends the Victorian Government address existing anomalies in relation to veterans' concessions and supports consistent eligibility for concessions across Australian states and territories.</p>	<p>A. The Victorian Government works with the Commonwealth and other state governments to achieve reciprocal concessions for veterans.</p>
	<p>B. The Victorian Government ensures ex-prisoners of war gain access to the municipal rates concession.</p>
	<p>C. The Victorian Government implements measures to standardise veterans and war widows' concessions across local government areas.</p>

Council's Recommendation to the Victorian Government	Suggested Approach or Initiative
<p>9. The Veteran Council recommends the Victorian Government strengthen its current education programs to inform the community about the contribution of veterans in their service to the nation, with new initiatives in the lead up to the Centenary of ANZAC in 2015.</p>	<p>A. The Veterans Council establish arrangements to coordinate community education programs across Victoria that relate to the ANZAC spirit and Australia's war-time history.</p>
	<p>B. The Victorian Government, in consultation with the Veterans Council, introduces a Spirit of ANZAC program to assist selected teachers involved in the delivery of war-time history education.</p>
	<p>C. The Victorian Government, in consultation with the Veterans Council, develops relevant curriculum materials to support teachers in the delivery of war-time history education.</p>
	<p>D. The Victorian Government, in consultation with the Veterans Council, develops curriculum materials to support ESO presentations in schools, which link to the above mentioned war-time history program and allows for injection and sharing of personal stories (the strength of the current ESO approach).</p>
	<p>E. The Victorian Government, in consultation with the Veterans Council, extends the Spirit of ANZAC Prize to include a trip to the Australian War Memorial for the finalists who are not selected for the overseas trip.</p>
	<p>F. The Victorian Government implements measures to strengthen the Shrine education program as the pre-eminent focus for military/veteran-related education for schools and the general community; and ensures this is linked to the Essential Learning Standards Curriculum.</p>
	<p>G. The Department of Planning and Community Development in partnership with the Australian Centre of the Moving Image (ACMI) and the Shrine captures the personal stories of veterans through digital story telling.</p>
	<p>H. The Department of Planning and Community Development digitises unit histories and ensures they are more readily available via a website connected to existing veteran-related websites.</p>

Council's Recommendation to the Victorian Government	Suggested Approach or Initiative
<p>10. The Veteran Council recommends the Victorian Government take action to strengthen the role of the Shrine of Remembrance.</p>	<p>A. The Victorian Government establishes a policy framework that articulates the current and future role of the Shrine of Remembrance (in terms of education, commemoration, and any expanded function).</p> <p>B. The Victorian Government reviews the Shrine's business model to ensure a sustainable model underpins the Shrine's current and future role.</p>
<p>11. The Veteran Council recommends the Victorian Government take action to improve the knowledge and understanding of the veteran community about available programs and services to support the needs of veterans and their dependants.</p>	<p>A. The Veterans Council to conduct regular 'communication forums' across Victoria for ESOs and the veteran community, which would focus on information sharing about available services and support, along with examples of good practice. This would also involve bringing together DVA's Veterans' Affairs Network, Department of Planning and Community Development, Consumer Affairs Victoria and local government staff.</p> <p>B. The existing VVAA/RSL Veteran Support Centre network is built upon to create a 'one stop shop' portal at a local level, to provide information to Victorian veterans on federal and state government and ESO services.</p>



SECTION 1.

VICTORIAN VETERANS SECTOR STUDY: BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Victorian Veterans Council has developed the Victorian Veterans Sector Study at the request of the Victorian Government. The Report's purpose is to provide the Victorian Government with an overview of the state's veteran community, the challenges it faces, and identify areas for government action.

1.2 TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Victorian Veterans Council and the Victorian Government agreed the Report would address the following issues:

1. The changing profile of the veteran community, including: the ageing veteran population; the changing and differing needs of younger and older veterans; and the future of ex-service organisations (ESOs), with particular reference to declining membership.
2. Veterans' care, including: the unique role of ESOs that care for veterans in Victoria; and the role of the Victorian Government in the following areas:
 - provision of benefits and the extent to which they meet the contemporary needs of the veteran community
 - assistance to meet the special needs of veterans and the continuing care of any dependants with special needs

- provision of specific care facilities for veterans in recognition of their need to bond and share experiences with other veterans in their declining years.
3. Communication with veterans, including: examination of communication channels that aid the wellbeing of veterans; and whether communication methods and responses need modification to meet the current and future needs of veterans.
 4. Commemoration and education, including: preservation of veterans' heritage; and commemoration of veterans' service and community education about that service.

1.3 GOVERNANCE

The Victorian Veterans Council, which was established in 2006 as an independent statutory body under the *Veterans Act 2005*, guided and managed the study that informs this Report.

The Council's role is to support Victoria's veterans and it reports directly to the Premier on issues affecting the state's veteran community. In addition to advising the Premier, the Council distributes the ANZAC Day Proceeds Fund, the Victorian Veterans Fund and advises government on the allocation of other funds supporting veteran's heritage, education and commemoration programs. The Council also advises the Minister for Consumer Affairs on specific matters relating to the regulation of patriotic funds.

Members of the Veterans Council are:

- Major General Peter Haddad AO (Retd), Chair
- Peter Liefman, Deputy Chair
- Ms Maree Bowman
- Mr Peter Colliver (Royal Australian Air Force Association – Victorian Division)
- Brigadier John Deighton, AM MC (Retd) (RSL representative)
- Mr Bob Elworthy, Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia (Victorian Branch)
- Mr David Ford, CVO, AM, GM (Legacy representative)
- Ms Mary Kelly (Australian Veterans and Defence Services Council)
- Mr George Logan, RFD
- Mr Stephen Ryan
- Mr John Wells (Carry On Victoria)

The Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) provides the Council with secretariat support.

The Veterans Council managed the study through a Steering Group that was chaired by a Council member and included representatives from the following organisations:

- Returned and Services League of Australia (Victorian Branch)
- Melbourne Legacy
- Carry On (Victoria)
- Commonwealth Department of Veterans Affairs
- Department of Human Services
- Department of Planning and Community Development (Veterans Unit).

1.4 METHODOLOGY

The study's methodology included three key components: a survey distributed to ESOs, a series of focus group discussions with veterans across Victoria, and a desktop literature review of relevant research.

The survey was sent to 25 Victorian ESOs for their specific responses to questions about challenges facing younger and older veterans and their organisations, and their plans and ideas for the future. The survey encouraged the ESOs to consult with their branch members and provide a consolidated response.

After the surveys were collected, six focus groups were held across Victoria in Frankston, Melbourne, Geelong, Bendigo, Ballarat and Horsham. The groups encompassed the broader veteran community, including veterans who may or may not belong to an ex-service organisation, their dependants, and service providers. Chaired by an independent consultant who has experience working with the veteran community, participants discussed the challenges they face, and possible solutions.

Regardless of the number of attendees at any one focus group, or the geographical location, there were consistent and recurring themes and recommendations presented, which reinforced the findings from the surveys.

1.5 SCOPE

The study took an inclusive approach to encompass all Victorian veterans, their families and dependants. To ensure the study was inclusive, any smaller groups or those who did not meet the strict technical or legislative definition of a 'veteran' were recognised and allowed to have input, if they wished, without reducing the primary focus of the study.

1.6 DEFINITIONS

1.6.1 VETERAN

The definition of a 'veteran' in the *Veterans Act 2005* has been used for this Report. The Act defines a 'veteran' as a person who performed service or duty and who now resides in Victoria, but does not include current members of the Australian Defence Force rendering continuous full-time service (see **Appendix A** for more details).

1.6.2 YOUNGER VETERAN

The term 'younger veteran' in this Report is similar to the definition of 'veteran' above, with the additional context that they performed service or duty after the Vietnam War (1975).

1.6.3 VETERAN COMMUNITY

The term 'veteran community' in this Report is inclusive of veterans, war widows, spouses and dependants. Reference to 'widows' and 'dependants' is used in a broader sense than that used by the Commonwealth Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA), and includes those who both receive and don't receive Commonwealth Government entitlements.

1.6.4 VICTORIA'S EX-SERVICE ORGANISATIONS

The bodies representing the veterans' sector in Victoria consist of approximately 25 separate state entities or ex-service organisations (ESOs), many of which are part of a national association, and some have regional branches across Victoria (see **Appendix D** for a list of ESOs).

The Returned and Services League (RSL) is recognised as the principal ESO in Australia and Victoria, by virtue of its large membership base, resources, public acceptance, and history. Other prominent ESOs include Legacy, Carry On and the Vietnam Veterans Association.

Unit and ship associations also exist for veterans who served in particular units or on ships. Examples are HMAS Sydney and the Vietnam Logistics Support Veterans Association, the Royal Australian Regiment (RAR) Association, and the 2/14 Battalion Association. Air Force unit associations include the Odd Bod Association, RAAF Europe and RAAF Vietnam Veterans Association.

All ESOs have been established to support ex-service men and women and their dependants. They provide a range of services including social activities, welfare and pension-support services and advocacy.

Together these entities and their regional groups make up approximately 400 bodies that exist in Victoria today (307 of which are RSL sub-branches).

The services that ESOs provide are discussed in Section Two of this Report.

1.6.5 PATRIOTIC FUNDS (ESO TRUST FUNDS)

Patriotic funds are trust funds (including money, securities and property) raised by the ex-service community to be used for 'a patriotic purpose'. A patriotic purpose is defined in the *Veterans Act 2005* as being for the relief, assistance or support of serving or ex-service personnel or their dependants, or for the purchase, maintenance and refurbishment of club rooms for the use of ex-service personnel. See section 3.2.4 for more information about patriotic funds.

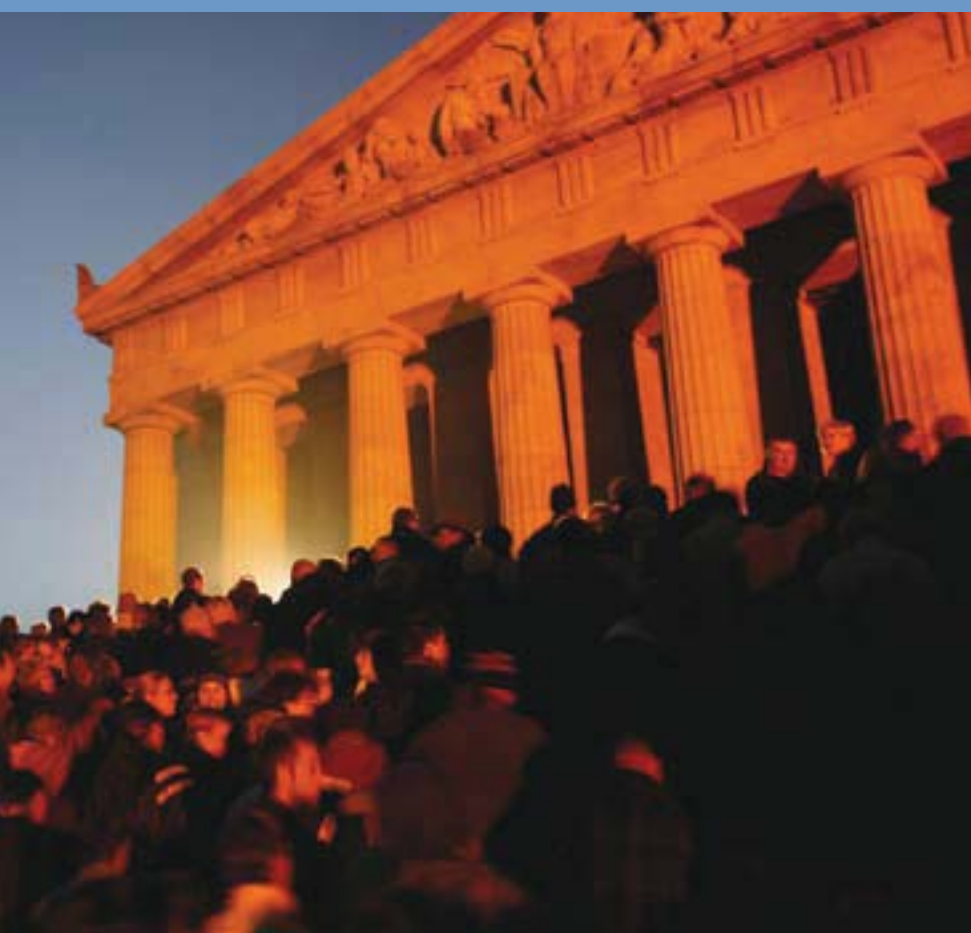
1.7 THIS REPORT

This Report presents advice in accordance with the Terms of Reference for the Victorian Veterans Sector Study and concludes the work of the Steering Group.

Section 2 is an analysis of the population, size and structure of the Victorian veterans' sector. It provides a useful starting point for the Victorian Government, the veterans' sector itself and other stakeholders to better understand the sector's issues and challenges.

Section 3 discusses the challenges facing the veterans' sector, describes current activity to address them, and provides an analysis of opportunities for improvement. Finally, for each critical challenge identified, the Victorian Veterans Council makes a specific recommendation for Victorian Government action.

The Appendices provides, among others, details of Commonwealth Department of Veterans' Affairs and Victorian Department of Human Services support for veterans, available transport concessions for veterans and a listing of Victorian state-level ESOs.



SECTION 2.

THE VICTORIAN VETERANS' COMMUNITY: THE CURRENT SITUATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

A comprehensive analysis of the population, size and structure of the Victorian veterans' sector is provided in this Section. It provides a useful starting point for the Victorian Government, the veterans' sector itself and other stakeholders to better understand the sector's issues and challenges.

2.2 VETERAN POPULATION TRENDS

The best available statistics are those provided by the Commonwealth Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA). While the data is not a comprehensive picture of all veterans (it only captures those veterans and dependants in receipt of DVA services and benefits), it does include the majority of World War II veterans and is indicative of demographic trends.

The data clearly illustrates that the overall veteran population is ageing (see **Figure I** below). Approximately 59 per cent of Victoria's DVA pensioners are aged between 80 and 90 years. The DVA figures also indicate that war widows now outnumber men in DVA's older client population.

DVA estimates that approximately 30,000 World War II veterans live in Victoria, 17,200 of whom are in receipt of DVA services and benefits¹. As of March 2008, their average age is 85.7 years.

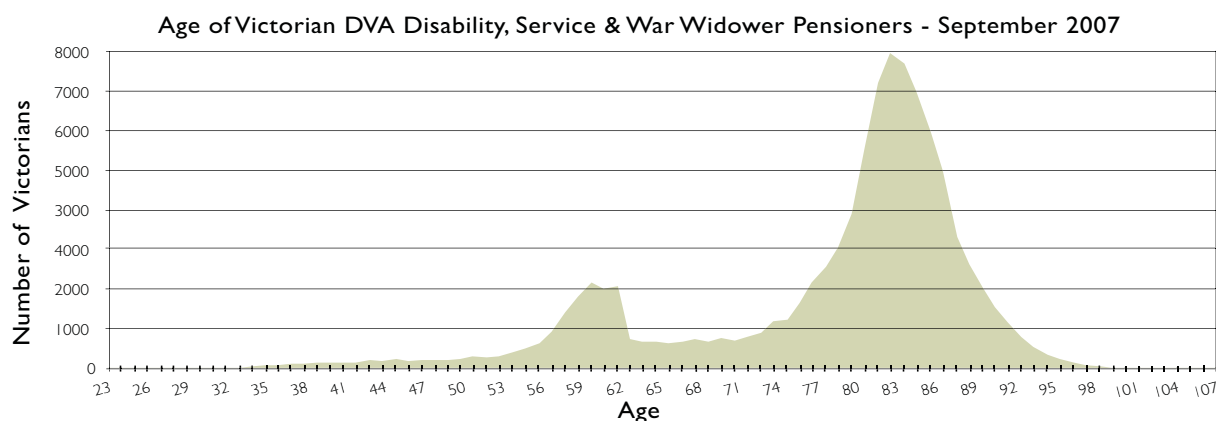


Figure I: Commonwealth Department of Veterans Affairs pensioner summary: disability, service & war widow(s) pensioners, Victoria, September 07

¹The figures exclude some World War II Safety Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988 (SRCA) and Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004 (MRCA) veterans and those veterans who have never approached DVA. The figures should be regarded as indicative.

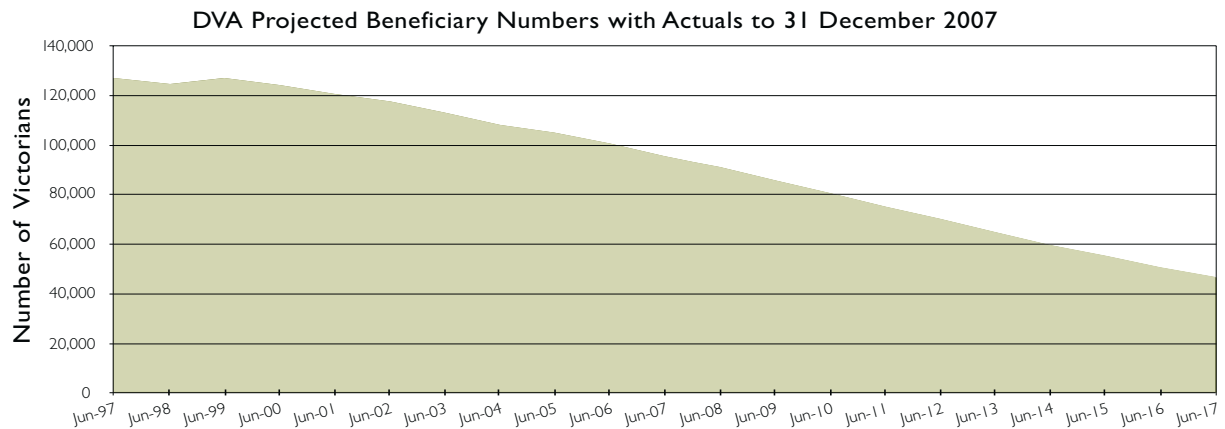


Figure 2: Commonwealth Dept. of Veterans Affairs projected beneficiary numbers with actuals to 31 December 07 (Victoria).

The consequence of this ageing veteran population is a corresponding decline in forecasted numbers of veterans over time.

The data in **Figure 2** above provides DVA's forecast of the future client population for Victorian veterans and their dependants in receipt of pensions, allowances and/or health care under the *Commonwealth Veterans Entitlement Act 1986*. This population is forecast to decline by about 50 percent from 2008 to 2017, with the rate of decline continuing beyond that point.

Another view of the veteran population can be taken by looking at the population categorised by location and time of operational service and by category of pension support provided by DVA. The national figures are shown in **Table 1** below:

Vietnam veterans are the second biggest group of veterans after World War II veterans: eventually they will constitute the majority of veterans in the Victorian community.

	Service Pensioners			Disability Pensioners		
	Mar 06	Mar 07	Change	Mar 06	Mar 07	Change
1. WWII	68,729	61,217	-10.93%	75,392	68,865	-8.66%
2. Korea/Malaya/FESR	9,491	9,298	-2.03%	11,187	10,943	-2.18%
3. Vietnam	25,124	26,033	3.62%	30,622	31,364	2.42%
4. Gulf War	30	34	13.33%	298	317	6.38%
5. East Timor	79	111	40.51%	1,355	1,550	14.39%
6. Other post 1972	79	116	46.84%	792	844	6.57%
7. Defence/pkeeping				27,335	27,147	-0.69%
8. Comm & Allied	20,432	19,284	-5.62			

Table 1: Australian numbers of service and disability pensioners. Source: DVA Pensioner Summary, March 07

The *Third Australian Vietnam Veterans Mortality Study* estimates that 8,446 Vietnam veterans are living in Victoria: 5,396 in Melbourne and 3,050 in rural Victoria. As of March 2007, 5,456 Vietnam veterans in Victoria were on a DVA disability pension.

In 2007 there were 1,551 Korean War veterans living in Victoria. Most were living in Melbourne and metropolitan areas (1,070), with the remainder in rural Victoria. Other smaller veteran contingents served in the Far East Strategic Reserve (FESR) and the Malayan Emergency. Nearly all veterans of Korea, Malaya and FESR are now on a disability pension.

Australian service personnel have also served overseas in the Indonesian Confrontation, the Gulf War, East Timor, Afghanistan and other defence, peacekeeping and Commonwealth and Allied activities.

2.2.1 CURRENT MEMBERS OF THE ADF – OUR FUTURE VETERANS

As at May 2008, the Australian Defence Force (ADF) employed 51,504 permanent members of the ADF, 19,562 reservists and 14,516 civilian staff.

As at June 2008, approximately 3,500 ADF personnel were deployed on 10 ongoing operations overseas, including Iraq (1,575), Afghanistan (970), Timor (780) and the Solomon Islands (140). An additional 450 personnel were deployed to protect Australia's borders and offshore maritime interests.

The largest group of service personnel is 20–29 years old, making up 43 per cent of total numbers. This is followed by those aged 30–39, representing 31 per cent of total numbers. There are smaller numbers in the under 20 years and over 40 years of age (8 per cent and 10 per cent respectively).

2.3 OVERVIEW OF THE VICTORIAN VETERANS' SECTOR

To better understand the overall structure of the Victorian veterans' sector, below is a discussion that profiles the longest serving ESOs, how they organise themselves, who they cater for and how to categorise them; reasons for duplication and sensitivities within the sector; and how the sector's activities are currently funded and regulated.

2.3.1 PROFILES OF THE LONGEST STANDING EX-SERVICE ORGANISATIONS

- The Returned and Services League (RSL): The largest and most prominent ESO in Victoria and Australia. It was established in 1916 under the name of the Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League of Australia (RSSILA), to preserve the spirit of mateship formed on the battlefields of World War I, to honour the memory of the fallen and to provide mutual assistance.
- The Naval Association of Australia: Formed in 1920 as 'not just an excuse for getting old shipmates together, but also to help any of those old shipmates who might have fallen upon hard times'. It began as the Ex-Naval Men's Association of Australia, which merged in 1922 with the China Naval Contingent Association. In 1960 it changed its title to the Naval Association of Australia in order to open its doors to current serving personnel.
- The Royal Australian Air Force Association: was formed in 1920 as the Australian Flying Corps Association based on the airmen of World War I. It has since expanded and now has divisions in every State and a national office in Canberra.
- The War Widows and Widowed Mother's Association was founded in 1922. When the association began, many mothers of young men who died in the First World War joined the association, hence the name War Widows and Widowed Mothers' Association of Victoria. An influx of younger members joined the Association following the Second World War.
- Melbourne Legacy: Established in 1923 to care for the widows and children of deceased servicemen, and this support for children and war widows continues today.
- Carry On: Formed in 1932 by a small group of former World War I soldiers who wanted to help other ex-servicemen in need. Today, Carry On helps members and former members of the military forces who have served in war, peacekeeping duties or those who have been injured during training. Wives, widows and dependant children are also eligible for assistance.

- The War Widows Guild was formed in 1945 to watch over and protect the interests of war widows. Guilds were formed in all States during 1946-1947 plus the Australian Capital Territory in 1966. All were united in a National Guild which gained many improvements in pensions, housing, children's allowances and hospital care. In November 1947 Jessie Vasey called a conference of National Body delegates from all States to meet in Melbourne to form a federal body. While each State body is autonomous in domestic organisation, the Conference achieved unity and biennial congresses have been held ever since.

After World War II, and again after Vietnam, many new smaller ESOs emerged, each to serve a particular group of veterans and their families. These smaller ESOs typically have less than 2000 members: examples are the Vietnam Veterans Federation of Victoria or the Extremely Disabled War Veterans Association of Victoria run entirely by volunteers.

2.3.2 STRUCTURE OF EX-SERVICE ORGANISATIONS

ESOs have differing organisational structures, staff, membership and service arrangements. About 95 per cent of ESOs are incorporated associations, all are not-for-profit, independent from government, self-governing and run by committees of management. The majority of these committees are run by veterans. In fact, some ESOs state in their constitutions that all, or specific, committee positions must be occupied by veterans. All of these committee positions are voluntary.

The veterans' sector relies almost entirely on the tireless work of thousands of volunteers each year. These volunteers support a wide range of ESO activities: they sit on committees; support welfare, hospital visits, social and fundraising efforts; host commemoration and education activities – to name a few. The majority of these volunteers are themselves veterans. Without these volunteers, the sector would not be able to operate effectively.

2.3.3 WHO EX-SERVICE ORGANISATIONS CATER FOR

ESOs have been established to cater for the following sub-groups within the veteran community:

- Veterans who served in the Army, Navy, and Air Force. These include those who are connected through the following groupings:
 - those who have had military service, have served in particular theatres of war, or within a particular unit
 - those who formed sub-groups because of a particular and shared circumstance (such as those with a total and permanent injury)
- War widows and dependants.

It is difficult to estimate what percentage of the veteran community belongs to an ESO as no reliable data is available. Although large numbers of veterans and war widows belong to one or more ESOs, it is important to note that many people have no affiliation at all.

Most ESOs report a decline in membership due to the ageing veteran population and their inability to attract younger veterans. As an example, since 1990 Melbourne Legacy has inducted 930 new members. Of that number only one person is a veteran with post-1975 operational service.

As at May 2008, total RSL state membership grew slightly to 61,750 (an increase of 2.6% in two years). This figure includes 34,537 service members, 1,914 life members and 25,299 affiliate members. The growth is due to an increase in affiliate membership, which is a membership category enabling family members of serving and ex-service men and women, along with members and ex-members of the police, fire brigade, ambulance and SES, to join the RSL. The RSL created this membership category to maintain the 'bloodlines' of those who have served their country in both peace and war (see **Appendix B** for the RSL's membership categories).

2.3.4 HOW TO CATEGORISE EX-SERVICE ORGANISATIONS

The Report recognises that ESOs have differing needs and concerns depending on what part of the veteran community they represent and serve. Categorising Victoria's ESOs is not a simple task. They can be categorised by scale; and/or by the services they provide; and/or by the members they

serve; and/or by their status as an independent entity or as part of a national organisation.

In addition to providing locations for veterans and dependants to meet, the types of services provided by ESO's include the following:

- advocacy/lobbying support
- organisation of social activities
- organisation of/involvement in commemorative activities
- advice on entitlements and pensions
- assistance with compensation claims
- production of a regular newsletter
- fundraising activities to sustain operations
- community/school education programs
- advice on transitioning into civilian life
- support for research and studies into the health and welfare of veterans
- referrals to legal and other specialist services
- help for members to apply for service medals
- financial assistance such as food vouchers, interest-free loans, help to pay outstanding accounts and covering education costs
- counselling and bereavement services
- assistance with funeral arrangements
- visitation/companionship services
- transport assistance
- provision of specialist accommodation.

While a small number of ESOs seek to provide their members with most or all of the services listed above, most are only able to provide selected services. This makes it difficult to attempt to classify ESOs on the range of services provided. Therefore, for the purposes of this Report, a more appropriate basis for categorisation is 'the common interests of members'.

A categorisation by membership is as follows:

- **Type A:** organisations that appeal to and are open to the broader veteran community, (such as RSL and Carry On).
- **Type B:** organisations that cater for specific veteran 'communities of interest', such as Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Ex Servicemen and Women (TPI), Legacy, War Widows Guild and the Extremely Disabled Association.

- **Type C:** organisations formed to support veterans with a 'common experience', such as the Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Association, Vietnam Veterans associations, National Servicemens Association, unit associations and Navy, Army and Air Force associations.

It is also possible to categorise ESOs by scale, based on membership size. Other factors such as annual turnover, services provided, asset base, organisational reach (number of branches) and number of volunteers are in most instances linked to and determined by membership size.

Such a categorisation, based on national membership figures, would include the following ESOs:

- **Large** (greater than 10,000 members): RSL, War Widows Guild of Australia, Totally and Permanently Disabled Soldiers Association of Australia, National Servicemens Association Inc.
- **Medium** (2,000–10,000 members): Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia, Vietnam Veterans Federation, Legacy, War Widows and Widowed Mothers Association, Naval Association of Australia, Regular Defence Force Welfare Association, Extremely Disabled Association, Royal Australian Air Force Association, the Partners of Veterans Association of Australia Inc.
- **Small** (less than 2000 members): all other ESOs as listed in **Appendix D**, all unit associations.

Please note that the term 'membership' for some ESOs, such as Legacy refers to the workers (volunteers) that support their 'clients' (eligible widows, children and disabled dependants). Therefore, although Legacy membership is less than 10,000 (placing it in the medium sized ESO category), Australia-wide Legacy has 120,000 widows registered as clients and in Victoria, the figure is around 34,000. In this instance, the client base, rather than membership figures is a more accurate reflection of the ESO's scale.

2.3.5 DUPLICATION OF VETERANS' SERVICES

Service duplication and membership overlaps have become features of this sector over the years. This has partly been caused by various ESOs wanting to provide broader services to their members. It has also been caused by historical practices that narrowed membership eligibility, forcing those excluded to create separate organisations to meet their unique needs.

In most cases, the practices that caused the establishment of separate entities no longer apply. For example, despite the fact that the RSL now offers very broad categories of membership (see **Appendix B**) and is well placed to provide a comprehensive range of services to the veteran community, there remains a desire by some smaller and/or specific purpose ESOs to remain independent, active and relevant.

2.3.6 VETERANS' SECTOR SENSITIVITIES

A number of sensitivities have shaped relationships between veterans and ESOs, and ESOs and other agencies (including government and non-government bodies).

A disparate hierarchy of organisations and the numerous overlays of forums, as well as the inability to agree on one representative body, all stem from a culture that inculcates intense rivalry and esprit de corps. This culture has fostered separation between the Services (Army, Navy, Air Force), between Corps (Infantry versus Ordnance), and between units (at regiment, battalion, company, and platoon level). Critically for the veterans' sector as a whole, this has worked against the creation of a collective voice and ability to collaborate towards clear and feasible objectives.

In terms of planning and policy making for this sector, an awareness of these rivalries and tensions can help stakeholders (such as the Victorian Government) understand the nuances of the sector, and thereby help the formulation of more accurate and sensitive policies.

Examples of existing tensions include:

- Some veterans being unwilling to attend RSL-sponsored activities, or enter RSL buildings: they still feel hurt because of the RSL's restrictive membership policies decades ago.
- Distrust towards government and other agencies with 'authority' (including Victorian and national ESO branches in some instances): some ESOs feel that these bodies are trying to take over their operations and assets.
- In relation to different operational theatres, some veterans believe their experiences are more important than those of others.
- Those between Army, Navy or Air Force veterans.
- Some veterans who served during times of conflict or war viewing peacekeeping missions as less important.
- Sensitivities between those who have and haven't experienced operational service.
- Disagreement about who is eligible for DVA benefits (and for what purposes).

2.3.7 FUNDING OF ACTIVITIES

ESOs finance their activities through fundraising efforts, bequests, membership subscriptions, government grants and where applicable, patriotic funds.

The main government grants are those offered by the Commonwealth, through DVA, and in Victoria, the State Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD), Department of Industry, Innovation and Regional Development (DIIRD) and the Community Support Fund. Grants are available for education scholarships, commemoration and education, maintenance of war memorials and honour boards, small equipment grants and community facilities (see **Appendix E** for details about these grant programs).

The Victorian Veterans Fund, managed by the Veterans Council, provides grants of up to \$50,000 to ESOs for education and commemoration purposes. Twenty-nine organisations received funds totalling \$343,480 in the inaugural round in 2007.

ESOs can also apply to the ANZAC Day Proceeds Fund through the Veterans Council for welfare purposes. Approximately 20 ESOs receive grants from a pool of \$350,000–\$450,000 each year.

It is worth noting that many veterans and ESOs tend not to access services or funding programs available to the broader community such as Senior Victorians. This is partly due to historical and cultural factors whereby government agencies (Commonwealth in particular) developed specialised veteran programs and services and carefully targeted them to the veteran community.

This targeted approach was considered the best way to communicate with and meet the needs of veterans. However, the downside has been that the veteran community tends not to access many of the health, welfare, education and other support services offered to the broader Victorian community through state and local governments. A number of relevant programs and services have been identified in this Report to improve access for veterans (see **section 3.2.2**).

The RSL has been especially enterprising and successful in establishing a range of revenue streams independent of government funding. These include commercial arrangements to market products, the annual ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day (Poppy Day) Appeals and the AFL ANZAC Day Football Match patrons' tinshake.

2.3.8 PATRIOTIC FUNDS (ESO TRUST FUNDS)

Patriotic funds are trust funds (including money, securities and property) raised by the ex-service community to be used for a patriotic purpose. A patriotic purpose is defined in the *Veterans Act 2005* as being for the relief, assistance or support of serving or ex-service personnel or their dependants, or for the purchase, maintenance and refurbishment of club rooms for the use of ex-service personnel.

A large proportion of patriotic funds were raised in the aftermath of World War I and World War II and placed in trust funds for the benefit of veterans and their dependants. New funds continue to be set up, with four new funds established in 2007.

Many funds are in the form of buildings and over time the value of these funds, plus ex-service welfare funds that presently number 616, have grown significantly and have an estimated book value of \$470 million. Of the 616 patriotic funds:

- the RSL is the trustee of approximately 480 funds (almost 80 per cent)
- individually incorporated associations such as Legacy branches are trustees of approximately 30 funds
- the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia – Victorian Branch is the trustee of 27 funds
- a small number of individual funds have three or four people appointed as trustees.

In terms of how much each of these patriotic funds are worth, an analysis of 500 of the 2006 annual statements provided the following information:

In relation to income:

- 71 funds had income greater than \$100,000
- 30 funds had income between \$50,001 and \$100,000
- 130 funds had income between \$10,001 and \$50,000
- 72 funds had income between \$5,001 and \$10,000
- 146 had income between \$1 and \$5,000
- 51 funds (mainly building funds) had assets only with no income.

In relation to assets:

- 97 funds had assets greater than \$500,000
- 90 funds had assets between \$100,001 and \$500,000
- 46 funds had assets between \$50,001 and \$100,000
- 120 funds had assets between \$10,001 and \$50,000
- 46 funds had assets between \$5,001 and \$10,000
- 104 funds had assets between \$1 and \$5,000.
- There were 132 funds that had less than \$10,000 in both income and assets.

There were 82 funds that had less than \$5,000 in both assets and income.

2.3.9 REGULATION OF FUNDS

The Victorian Government has been involved in the regulation of patriotic funds since 1939, which put simply, are the assets of Victoria's veterans' community. Victoria is the only Australian state that regulates the management and dispersal of funds raised by public subscription for the benefit of veterans and, as a result, the only state to have such substantial assets and monies in this form.

Initially regulated under the *Patriotic Funds Act 1939*, these funds continue to be regulated under the *Veterans Act 2005*.

The regulatory functions include the establishment of new funds, contributions and collections, and transfer of money or assets from and between patriotic funds.

This Report has identified the need for clearer advice to trustees on how funds can be used. This is discussed further in section 3.2.4.

2.3.10 GOVERNMENT SERVICE PROVISION

This Report acknowledges that the Commonwealth Government, through DVA, plays a major role in supporting the veterans' community (see **Appendix C** for more information about DVA's services and programs). As an indicative figure, DVA's total budget for administered programs in Australia is close to \$10.8 billion in 2007–08.

In comparison the Victorian Government plays a smaller but nevertheless important service-provision role.

This Report has therefore focused on how the Victorian Government, in partnership with the ex-service community, can complement the Commonwealth's role in supporting the Victorian veterans' community both now and in the future.

'If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change.'

– Guiseppe di Lampedusa, *The Leopard*



SECTION 3.

CRITICAL CHALLENGES FOR THE VICTORIAN VETERANS' SECTOR

3.1 INTRODUCTION

To support the ageing veteran population, the Victorian Government, ex-service organisations and other key stakeholders need to understand and respond to some critical challenges.

This section discusses these matters in detail, describes current activity to address them, and provides an analysis of opportunities for improvement. Finally, for each critical challenge identified, the Victorian Veterans Council makes a specific recommendation for Victorian Government action.

The critical challenges are:

- 3.2 Viability of ex-service organisations
- 3.3 Veterans' health and welfare support
- 3.4 Improving public education programs
- 3.5 Supporting commemoration services
- 3.6 Veteran-services information access

3.2 VIABILITY OF EX-SERVICE ORGANISATIONS

Victoria's ex-service organisations (ESOs) are facing a number of issues impacting on their future viability including an inability to retain and recruit the required level of volunteers, difficulty engaging younger veterans, and service delivery issues.

Because of the decline in numbers in their supported population, some smaller ESOs are deciding to close or merge operations with like-minded organisations offering similar services. For the people involved, contemplating such change or finality may be hard to face and act on.

Many ESOs need support to understand how they can protect their heritage-related material such as memorabilia, honour boards and artefacts, as well as advice on how they can use and manage patriotic funds.

The discussion of these viability issues that follows has been principally informed by veterans' feedback as a result of the surveys and forums outlined in section 1.3.

3.2.1 SUSTAINABLE OPERATIONS

3.2.1.1 CHALLENGES

Victoria's ESOs have not been static over the decades: many have shown the capacity to change their roles and structures, as well as refocus their service delivery strategies. However, as the 21st century begins, ESOs are facing some significant challenges to their long-term sustainability. Their membership numbers are declining, their volunteer base is ageing and younger ex-service personnel often have different needs. Therefore many ESOs will need to change focus, close or merge to accommodate the different and changing needs of their membership.

Many ESOs are accepting these contemporary changes and making the required adjustments. For example, Carry On (Victoria) is reviewing its future operations in light of changes to its client group and growing financial and membership pressures – as identified in its 74th Annual Report in 2006. Specifically it is considering taking on larger holdings of independent living units, which will mean a greater focus on welfare to members rather than education funding such as scholarships.

The War Widows Guild remains strong and continues to make large and small decisions to adjust to the changing environment. According to the Guild's 2007 Annual Report, it has sold some property and used the funds to increase support to each branch for social and other activities. An important development has been the provision of subsidised accommodation at the Naval and Military Club for members travelling to Melbourne.

The 72 RSL sub-branches with gaming facilities are doing particularly well in terms of membership and patronage, and the ability to sustain operations. The RSL has clearly been able to modernise over the years. Its facilities and services appeal to members and the broader community alike, and it continues to look at new ways to raise revenue, through formalising fundraising activities on ANZAC Day (badge appeal), gaming machines, and entering into commercial arrangements.

The RSL is aware of the changing welfare needs of its ageing membership, and a number of recommendations to address this issue were made in its 2004 study, Responsibilities of the RSL Victorian Branch for the Delivery of Welfare Support (see **Appendix F**).

New partnerships are being forged between like-minded ESOs. For example, the War Widows and Widowed Mothers Association recently handed properties at Rosebud over to Carry On, with a clause allowing access for their members for five years, and on the understanding that any surviving members could access the houses for occasional seaside holidays.

Carry On also took in the Ex-Prisoners of War and Relatives Association (Ex-POWRA), providing spare office space and some staff assistance. Dandenong RSL then offered to share half the cost to produce the Ex-POWRA newsletter. The result is that Ex-POWRA is now on a sound footing.

Some members of the Victorian veteran community believe that changes in the sector should be more profound. One ESO leader suggested the creation of a single organisation (Veterans Australia) with all ESOs becoming members and agreeing to a set of goals, objectives and services. 'If nothing else, this would be a more effective use of resources, improve communications and reduce duplication,' he said.

Conversely, not all veterans eagerly embrace the need for change: some acknowledge that accepting change is difficult, while others would prefer any change to occur 'once we're gone'.

Inability to retain and recruit volunteers

No data is available on the number of volunteers in the veteran community, but there are estimated to be thousands. All ESOs rely on volunteers to deliver services to the veteran community and their dependants including fundraising, organising commemorations, public education, social events and welfare services. Only a few ESOs, such as RSL and the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia (VVAA), employ paid staff to run some of their operations, but even they are still heavily reliant on volunteers to deliver services across Victoria.

The sector's reliance on volunteers is becoming increasingly problematic. As one ESO leader said: 'Men and women of the veteran community in their eighties and nineties cannot be expected to deliver these services anymore'. The current volunteers are becoming increasingly frail: their ability to carry out the tasks of ESOs is limited, as their focus shifts towards their own health and their families.

All ESOs are looking for ways to involve not only younger veterans, but also younger people to sustain their operations. Many ESOs have tried recruitment drives but reported difficulties in attracting new volunteers to take up the work of the ageing veterans. One ESO spent months establishing a committee to devise a volunteer recruitment strategy that included local community organisations, schools and university students. The strategy included innovative ways that community organisations could 'share volunteers'. They successfully recruited some students from the local university, 'but they didn't stick around'.

Volunteer recruitment and retention is a challenge faced by community organisations across Australia, and is not unique to the Victorian veteran community. Despite the fact that volunteering rates across Victoria remain strong and stable, with about 41 per cent of Victorians participating in volunteering activity, (broadly in line with national participation rates), it is clear that the nature of volunteering has changed (FaCSIA, 2006).

Research has found that during the past 10 years, more people are volunteering, but their volunteering is episodic, and they are volunteering for shorter periods of time (Giving Australia, 2005). There is a nationwide trend away from formal volunteering within organisational structures, with more than 50 per cent of volunteering activity now occurring in less formal settings. Communities report the more traditional modes of volunteering such as service delivery and emergency services are the most affected by this changing face of volunteering.

Government regulation

Governments require criminal record checks (which are often referred to as police checks), national name checks or national police certificates to be conducted where volunteers work with vulnerable people such as children, disabled people or elderly people. The aim is protection and safety of the community.

However, some volunteers believe the need to undertake a separate police check for each volunteer activity is burdensome. They believe that one generic police check should be enough to cover all activities. In addition, volunteers find it frustrating to have to re-apply for their police check every three years. 'If you have committed an offence, the current police check should be cancelled; but if you have not, the current one should be rolled over into the next three years,' one veteran said.

The administrative burden is only one issue associated with police checks. Some veterans feel that having to undergo them is offensive. These are men and women who represented their country during wartime – they are proud and honourable people and, for some, this requirement is an insult – with one veteran reporting: 'At the very mention of police checks at a recent committee meeting two veterans just walked out of the room. We've lost a number of volunteers due to the need to undertake police checks for work they've done for decades.'

Although many community organisations across Australia may view police checks as an inconvenience, particularly where a long-standing relationship between the organisation and the person volunteering exists, police checks are an important aspect of community safety and protection. The focus should instead be on finding creative ways of streamlining the process.

Inability to engage younger veterans

ESOs repeatedly say they are unable to recruit younger veterans (those who served post 1975), which is impacting on the viability of their organisations. 'They are just not joiners,' one ESO said.

However, there is more to the picture than younger veterans not being 'joiners'. Significantly fewer numbers of men and women have served overseas in recent times, compared with the earlier conflicts of World War I, World War II and Vietnam, and hence there are fewer numbers of veterans to potentially join an organisation.

Furthermore, at the RSL Victorian Branch's younger veterans' forum in November 2007, many younger veterans expressed confusion as to which ESOs they should join. For many who served in the military from 1975 to 1990 there were limited opportunities to serve overseas in operational theatres. This has changed in recent years, but many were unclear as to how this affected their eligibility for ESO membership.

One ESO leader said: 'Younger veterans are very different to previous veteran groups: they see themselves as current or ex-defence members who have operational service in war zones (not veterans). They have young families with both mum and dad working and don't have the time to attend memorials and volunteer groups when the pressures of a young family in the modern world are all-consuming.'

'The other veteran groups are primarily retired and have the time to devote to their diminishing groups. It is very easy to criticise this younger veteran group as not being pro-active but with both parents working and with children to raise, they are focused on the issues at hand.'

Another ESO leader explained that ADF members now spent longer times on overseas deployments, and this reduced time with family. In between deployments, time with family was the priority.

At the younger veterans' forum, however, current ADF members said ESOs would be relevant to them throughout their military careers and beyond, including:

- the induction phase, recruitment training, going to and returning from deployments – for information and advice

- support for families while they were away
- preparing for transition to civilian life.

ESOs were seen as another way to connect with people who had previously served in the military, and to establish that feeling of mateship that is so important to them as ADF members. See **Box 3.2.1.A** for more information about the needs of younger veterans.

Box 3.2.1.A

Addressing the Needs of Younger Veterans

The survey results from this Report and findings from the RSL younger veterans' forums, and consultation with the Australian Peacemakers and Peacekeepers Veterans Association, identified the following issues for younger veterans:

Recognition

Younger veterans need to be recognised by the community on immediate return from service. It is important not to make the mistakes of the past (Korean and Vietnam War soldiers were not recognised).

Communication

Many younger veterans were unclear about the services ESOs offer. Participants agreed that the Internet was the best tool to seek information. All serving ADF and Reserve members are given defence email addresses with defence Internet access, although some lower-ranking members may not have access to a computer.

Mental Health

Recognition and support of mental health issues was a priority. Partners talk of their spouses 'returning a little different each time'. Many soldiers sleep for days on returning, whereas others struggle to sleep at all (Carlyon, 2007).

Family Support

Many spouses and children of serving ADF members experience displacement and isolation. ESOs are seen as a source of support for these families by connecting them with other defence families and sharing knowledge.

3.3.1.2 CURRENT ACTIVITY TO MAINTAIN SUSTAINABLE OPERATIONS

ESO activity

The RSL Victorian Branch has developed a volunteer management manual to help sub-branches with recruitment, training and ongoing management. The manual stipulates procedures such as reimbursing volunteers for their out-of-pocket expenses.

The RSL regularly runs forums targeting younger veterans and currently serving ADF members with the aim to develop relationships and networks and identify ways the RSL and other ESOs can better support these groups. Following these forums in 2007, the RSL has committed itself to:

- assist ADF personnel with the transition to a civilian career
- modify the redeployment checklist to allow ADF personnel to indicate whether they want information about local RSL sub-branches and/or RSL sub-branches to contact their families while they are away
- take steps to establish RSL/veterans' advice 'shop fronts' at particular base locations in Victoria
- place relevant information on the RSL website
- include separate banners for Timor, Iraq and Afghanistan veterans to march behind on ANZAC Day 2008.

Another development is that the Australian Peacekeepers and Peacemaker Veterans Association (APPVA) is becoming the 'younger veterans ESO'. APPVA Victoria has approximately 240 members, and unlike most other ESOs, this membership rate is growing. See **Appendix G** for more information about APPVA.

Victorian Government activity

Stronger Community Organisations Project (SCOP):

A project highly relevant to ESOs, SCOP was established by the Minister for Victorian Communities in February 2007 to consider the role and value of community organisations, and in particular, to consider the contribution these organisations make to achieving active, inclusive and liveable communities.

It recognised that in recent times, there has not been a broadly based investigation of the non-profit sector in Victoria. SCOP examined the range of social and public policy trends that are shaping the future environment for community organisations in Victoria and made 21 recommendations for building their capacity and ensuring the sustainability of their contribution in the future. See **Appendix M** for SCOP's Terms of Reference.

The Victorian Government's response will result in a number of measures to build the capacity of community organisations, address sustainability challenges and reduce the regulatory burden on community organisations. Victoria's ex-service organisations will benefit from these measures. (See www.dpcd.vic.gov.au for more information about SCOP.)

Volunteer Small Grants Program: Through this program, the Department of Planning and Community Development provides up to \$5,000 for community not-for-profit organisations that involve volunteers at a local level. The purpose of the program is to extend local volunteering opportunities and encourage community organisations to attract volunteers from diverse backgrounds and create new opportunities for people to volunteer.

Small community organisations can also apply for funding of projects that improve their capacity to manage, develop and maintain existing volunteer programs. Organisations funded in this way need to show how this improved capacity will help future efforts to attract new volunteers and provide new volunteering opportunities.

RSL and Country Fire Authority (CFA) Community Facilities Funding Program:

This seeks to support better use of under-used RSL and CFA facilities by transforming them into multi-purpose facilities for the broader community. See **Box 3.2.1.B** for more information about this program.

Box 3.2.1.B

Community Funding Program transforms community assets

The RSL/CFA Community Facilities Funding Program was announced in 2006 and provides \$3.5 million to renovate and redevelop RSL and CFA buildings that are in disrepair, neglected, or needing modernisation to allow better access and larger group activities.

The program specifically targets areas of disadvantage in outer metropolitan and rural areas where local communities have few alternative facilities, and requires the government to work closely with the RSL and CFA and, by extension, local communities to identify key sites for the program.

The program also works to address issues relating to the diminishing number of veterans, mainly because it helps ensure the RSL's continued relevance in these communities.

The program will be run until 2011 and a range of RSL sites are under consideration at present.

Volunteering Victoria activity

With a network of resource centres in metropolitan and regional areas, Volunteering Victoria is a body that represents all aspects of the volunteering sector. It helps organisations that have volunteer workers and managers, individuals who work as volunteers and potential volunteers.

It also facilitates policy development in all areas of volunteering, from recruitment and human resource management to training and retention of volunteers through education, training and information services. See **Appendix H** for more information about Volunteering Victoria.

Commonwealth Government activity

DVA's Veterans' Affairs Network (VAN) is located across Victoria in DVA regional offices. VAN conducts regular regional forums to bring ESOs together to discuss strategies and initiatives for sustaining and improving service delivery. See **Box 3.2.1.C** for more information about VAN.

Box 3.2.1.C

Veterans' Affairs Network – providing valuable support to the veteran community

The Veterans' Affairs Network (VAN) is located in capital cities and regional areas throughout Australia to provide information and help with DVA matters.

VAN offices promote independence and quality of life for the veteran and defence-force community in their local area, help veterans and their families obtain information about DVA benefits and other services in their area, and help put the veteran community in contact with local service providers. Information is provided on an individual basis and to groups.

Members of the veteran community in receipt of DVA benefits can also advise VAN staff of any changes to their personal details such as address or banking details.

VAN staff are an excellent resource and referral point for issues relating to commemoration, health and compensation. VAN offices are located across Victoria in Melbourne (CBD), Frankston, Bairnsdale, Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, Mildura, Morwell, Wodonga and Warrnambool.

On a regional basis, veteran advisers help with all pension and entitlement questions, provide DVA and community service information and undertake Outreach visits. Community advisers work with ESOs and local service providers to help develop and enhance health services to the veteran community.

On a statewide basis, the Veteran Service Centre has a dedicated helpline for members of the veteran community, their families and representatives, including assistance with: Gold and White card entitlements; aides and appliances; dental and optical; veterans' home care; respite and convalescent care; transport; pension application forms and statement of earnings; and replacement of lost or stolen cards.

3.2.1.3 OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE SUSTAINABILITY OF OPERATIONS

Some leaders of smaller ESOs don't know how to remain operational. They are uncertain about how to modernise their volunteering practices, engage younger veterans or where to seek advice. They need to know how the Victorian Government can support them, and learn from the good-practice examples of other ESOs.

The RSL Victorian Branch regularly receives calls from sub-branches wanting to make the transition to a more sustainable model of operation. Because the RSL is a large ESO, it has the capacity to help its sub-branches adapt to meet these challenges. But it is a considerable task for many smaller ESOs with limited financial and organisational capacity.

Although VAN brings ESOs together to discuss a range of matters, there is no veteran-specific support structure for advice on sustainability matters.

In relation to the RSL's younger veterans' forums, some ESOs felt that information about the findings and outcomes could be more effectively communicated across the sector. Many ESOs would prefer that an independent body conducted such forums, rather than an ESO.

Opportunities exist for key ESOs to share information and work more collaboratively in their support and engagement of younger veterans.

RECOMMENDATION I

The Veterans Council recommends the Victorian Government establish a comprehensive approach to assist ESOs to sustain and/ or develop their operations.

It is proposed that:

- A. In partnership with ESOs, the Veterans Council develops an information package on available 'capacity building' grant programs. It would include case studies of good practice, tips on modernising volunteer opportunities, and engaging younger veterans. It would also include commonly asked questions and answers relating to managing transitions.

See Recommendation II about improved communications and a regular forum.

3.2.2 SERVICE DELIVERY

3.2.2.1 CHALLENGES

Some ESOs have a strong history of independence, sustaining their existence through fundraising efforts. Others have relied on annual government grant allocations to sustain their operations.

ESOs have tended not to be well connected with other community and non-DVA government agencies, services, activities and networks.

Veterans have been reluctant to access programs offered by local and state governments for the broader community unless they are packaged and targeted specifically for veterans.

Some ESOs said they didn't want to become too closely involved with 'civilian' agencies and initiatives because they wanted recognition for the unique nature of their military service. They didn't want to see a trend to the 'civilianisation' of veterans' entitlements; for example, a tendency to use the word 'injured' in place of 'wounded' in legislation and ordinary parlance. They also didn't want veterans' entitlements to be viewed as compensation for circumstances into which they had fallen, but rather entitlements for the military service they had rendered.

Despite these cultural and historic circumstances, many ESOs are now recognising the need to look more broadly for funding opportunities. The capacity of some of the larger ESOs to continue providing welfare, education and advocacy support is reducing as numbers of volunteers diminish. Gaps in service provision are emerging, particularly in regional areas.

3.2.2.2 CURRENT SERVICE-DELIVERY ACTIVITY

ESO activity

All ESOs provide some or all of the following seven core services:

- advocacy and lobbying support
- organisation of social activities
- organisation of and involvement in commemorative activities
- advice on entitlements and pensions
- assistance with compensation applications
- production of a regular newsletter
- fundraising activities to sustain operations.

In addition to these 'core' services, some ESOs provide the following services:

- community and school education programs
- advice on transitioning into civilian life
- support for research and studies into the health and welfare of veterans
- referrals to legal and other specialist services
- help for members to apply for service medals.

A small number of ESOs (in addition to above services) offer the following welfare-type services:

- financial assistance such as food vouchers, interest-free loans, help to pay outstanding accounts and covering education costs
- counselling and bereavement services
- assistance with funeral arrangements
- visitation/companionship services
- transport assistance
- provision of specialist accommodation.

The following list provides examples of the kinds of welfare services six of the principal ESOs are delivering to the Victorian veteran community.

RSL services include: various sporting and social activities, access to RSL facilities across Victoria, fundraising activities including the ANZAC Appeal and Poppy Appeal, *Mufti* newsletter, organising and promoting commemoration and education events, providing moral and active support for the ADF, advocacy and lobbying support, bereavement support, funeral arrangements, service records and medal entitlements, and DVA or Military Compensation Rehabilitation Scheme (MCRS) entitlement claims.

Through an initial DVA grant, the RSL has established an aged care co-ordinator in two RSL regions to provide veterans with a 'one-stop-shop' on information about aged care services and support. These positions continue to be sustained and operated by the RSL sub-branches and the Victorian branch.

The RSL has welfare co-ordinators and other paid staff at some RSL commercial licensed sub-branches. These personnel are increasingly delivering welfare-related services and facilitating access to other services.

Approximately 28 Veterans Support Centres have been set up across Victoria, and are mostly housed in RSL sub-branches. The centres are a partnership between the VVAA and RSL, and are supported by DVA through an annual grant. These centres provide financial counselling and assistance, job seeking assistance, visits for veterans and widows in hospitals and nursing homes, and help to complete pension and compensation claims. Paid welfare officers also provide information about DVA welfare support. See section 3.6 for more information about Veterans Support Centres.

Legacy services are extended to widows, children and dependants with a disability and include: advice, counselling, help with pension applications, financial assistance, education, accommodation, and legal and general welfare advice and support. This includes encouraging social activities for widows and sponsoring activities, camps and outings for children and dependants with a disability. With respect to education, Legacy provides financial support for Junior Legatees (children) for school fees, book lists and uniforms. Each year Legacy also conducts a National Junior Public Speaking Award (open to any student) through schools, with regional, state and National finals.

VVAA services include: help with pension applications and other entitlements, a forum to discuss issues affecting Vietnam veterans, social activities, a school education program, advocacy and lobbying support, research and studies.

Carry On services include: financial assistance such as payment of outstanding accounts and food vouchers, low rental accommodation in retirement villages, help for members to apply for welfare and disability pensions and entitlements; help for secondary and tertiary students who are dependants of ex-service men and women.

Vasey RSL Care Ltd services include: operating six low-level residential aged-care facilities (hostels), two high-level nursing home facilities, 18 Independent Living Units and 65 Community Aged Care Packages (CAPs) that provide services to clients in their own home.

Victorian Government activity

The Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) offers specific and broad support to veterans through a variety

of channels, including the Veterans Unit, the Office of Senior Victorians, the Office of Local Government and Heritage Victoria.

Veterans not eligible for Commonwealth DVA services can access those offered by Victoria's Department of Human Services (DHS). DHS is Victoria's largest government department and funds organisations such as hospitals, aged care facilities, ambulance services and community service agencies. See **Appendix I** for more information about DHS.

In terms of funding support, ESOs are able to apply for the ANZAC Day Proceeds Fund through the Veterans Council for welfare purposes. The ANZAC Day Proceeds Fund is dedicated to the welfare of the veteran community. About 18–25 ESOs receive grants from a pool of \$350,000–\$450,000 each year. Funding is derived from money raised at sporting events on ANZAC Day, including \$25,000 from the annual AFL ANZAC Day match.

The *ANZAC Day Act 1958 (Vic)* stipulates that no sporting events are to be held on ANZAC Day without the approval of the Minister. If approval is granted, a portion of the net profits from any such sports shall be paid into the ANZAC Day Proceeds Fund. If the event is held outside the metropolitan area, the Minister, after consulting the RSL, may authorise the funds raised to be paid to a local organisation.

The ANZAC Day Proceeds Fund is the only discretionary funding the Victorian Government has available to help the ex-service community fund its welfare activities. It is the primary source of income for smaller ESOs and helps them sustain their services to the veteran community.

Commonwealth Government activity

DVA delivers its income, compensation, welfare, health care, commemoration and education, and information support services through a nationwide network of:

- DVA state offices
- VAN regional offices
- Retirement Service Centres
- contracted agents, including Centrelink offices.

See **Box 3.2.1.C** for more information about VANs.

3.2.2.3 OPPORTUNITIES FOR SERVICE DELIVERY

ESOs and all levels of government need to work together to improve the delivery of services to veterans. Statewide mapping of service-delivery gaps would help create a better picture of what services are available and to whom, and aid plans for more integrated services.

Given the ANZAC Day Proceeds Fund is the Victorian Government's main way to provide ESOs with funds for their welfare activities, it is worth looking at how to increase the amount available to ESOs.

RECOMMENDATION 2

The Veterans Council recommends the Victorian Government co-ordinates State-based services available to the veteran community, and reviews the ANZAC Day Proceeds Fund to more effectively support ESOs in their provision of veterans' welfare.

It is proposed that:

- A. The Veterans Council, in partnership with ESOs, undertakes a statewide mapping and analysis of ESO and government services. This would include analysis of how existing regional staff and resources could be used more effectively or whether the creation of new networks was necessary.
- B. The Victorian Government explores avenues for increasing the capacity of the ANZAC Day Proceeds Fund. This may require reviewing the *ANZAC Day Act 1958*.
- C. The Veterans Council reviews guidelines in which the ANZAC Day Proceeds Fund could be more effectively targeted to support the welfare needs of veterans.

3.2.3 VETERAN-RELATED HERITAGE

3.2.3.1 CHALLENGES

Veterans, ESOs and the wider community have become increasingly aware that as the veteran population ages, objects and items that document Australia's service history need to be better identified, protected and displayed. Veterans' heritage includes, but is not limited to, war memorials, honour boards, community halls, avenues of honour, veterans' heritage trails, former colonial and Commonwealth defence-force sites, memorial plantings, memorabilia and the personal collections of veterans and their families.

In 2006, a caller to 774 ABC radio's morning show hosted by Jon Faine rang to say he had stumbled across a large World War I honour board for sale in a Collingwood second-hand shop. The caller and the honour board attracted considerable public attention and concern about how to ensure such heritage is respected and suitably housed and protected.

3.2.3.2 CURRENT ACTIVITY TO PRESERVE VETERAN-RELATED HERITAGE

ESO activity

The RSL Victorian Branch initiated an audit of memorabilia housed in RSL sub-branches across the state in October 2007. The audit is expected to be completed late 2008. The main focus of the audit is to identify significant items for Victoria and Australia, especially those at risk due to inappropriate storage or display. Many larger sub-branches have extensive collections and displays and active memorabilia officers (who are volunteers), but such activity varies greatly among the smaller sub-branches.

The VVAA (Victoria Branch) manages and substantially funds the Vietnam Veterans Museum at Phillip Island. The association is currently setting up a board of trustees to manage the museum as a trust company.

Legacy has some memorabilia – the most significant is a violin from Changi on display at Legacy House Melbourne. Managing and housing their small collection of memorabilia creates no immediate or future issues for Legacy.

The Clunes RSL sub-branch has established a partnership with the Clunes community museum to ensure that as veteran numbers decline in the town and the time comes to close the branch,

all its memorabilia and artefacts will be taken over, managed and preserved by the museum.

Similarly, the Catalina Club is planning to close in the next two years and will hand its memorabilia over to Melbourne's Wesley College for ongoing management and preservation. A long-standing relationship between these two organisations exists, involving education and commemoration activities, as well as the presentation of books to Wesley's library.

Unfortunately many more ESOs are unsure about what will happen to the important artefacts they currently house. It is critical plans are made to ensure the future management and protection of veteran-related heritage.

Veteran-related museums

Community museums provide many opportunities for local people and visitors, mostly through the efforts of dedicated volunteers. Victoria has more than 700 community museums, two thirds of which are in regional towns and cities. About 50 per cent of these operate on annual budgets of less than \$5,000. It is estimated that 1.5 million cultural heritage items are held in these collections.

Amongst these community museums are a number of veteran-specific museums, including the:

- Fort Queenscliff Museum with memorabilia from pre-federation onwards
- Vietnam Veterans Museum at Phillip Island
- Ranger Museum at Ballarat
- RAAF Museum at Point Cook
- 5/6 RVR History Room at Hawthorn that houses all memorabilia of the Victorian infantry battalions
- Bandiana Military Museum, Bandiana
- Tank Museum at Puckapunyal.

Shrine of Remembrance

Families with memorabilia often approach the Shrine for information and advice, and sometimes they offer to donate the items. The Shrine's current policy is not to collect the items, as it doesn't have staff or facilities to ensure the continuing preservation of war memorabilia.

However, the Shrine can advise on ways to preserve memorabilia within the family or suggest alternative institutions to approach with the offer of a donation. The Shrine records the names and contact details of all callers and takes details of the material discussed. Where possible a photograph of the material is taken.

In the medium term, the Shrine plans to obtain a database to help preserve the stories and material that come to its attention.

Victorian Government activity

In 2006 the Victorian Government established the Veterans Heritage Working Group (VHWG) to examine ways the state's veteran-related heritage could be protected for current and future generations. The VHWG is now chaired by the Minister Assisting the Premier on Veterans' Affairs, and is comprised of representatives from the following organisations:

- Department of Planning and Community Development
- Heritage Victoria
- Museum Victoria
- RSL Victorian Branch
- Shrine of Remembrance
- Victorian Veterans Council.

The VHWG's first task has been to initiate the Veteran Related Heritage Survey to identify and list veteran heritage, look at current management and protection arrangements, consider opportunities for improving protection (as required), and examine risks, funding opportunities and options for cataloguing. The results will be reported to the Victorian Government in 2008.

This Survey will bring together data collected by a range of people and organisations and includes monuments, botanic features, schools, churches, halls, and stained glass. It will also draw on valuable work that has already been done such as the RSL publication, *War Memorials of Victoria*, which records 1100 war memorials in Victoria (Christie et al, 1994). The Survey also incorporates the 1920 War Memorial Survey prepared by the Commonwealth Department of Works and Railways. As part of this 1920 survey, each town in Victoria was sent a questionnaire and the responses form important data about the types and dates of construction of various memorials throughout the state.

The Veteran Related Heritage Survey will review and extend this critical work by:

- bringing all the various veteran-related-heritage data types, such as war memorials, honour boards, memorial halls, avenues of honour and street names, together into one source
- including additional information, such as designers, sculptors and builders, together with available historical photographs
- setting out this valuable part of Victoria's heritage into an historical context and interpreting the significance of the various monuments
- enabling the public to access the data more readily by making it available on the web once the project is complete
- designing the website so it can be updated on an ongoing basis, including the ability to add associated records such as news clippings and link them to a particular memorial or heritage item.

The Victorian Government is also developing a guidebook, tentatively titled *Remembrance: A Traveller's Guide to Victoria's War-time Heritage*. On a geographical basis, the guidebook will tell the stories behind a significant number of the state's memorials, such as the Australian Commando Memorial at Tidal River, and commemorations to the 22 Victoria Cross winners buried across Victoria.

Further, the Victorian Government's heritage strategy, *Victoria's Heritage: Strengthening Our Communities* provides a range of programs to recognise, protect, interpret and manage Victoria's diverse heritage. One of the intentions of the strategy is to improve understanding of heritage-management techniques within the community. Initiatives to achieve this include an outreach project to provide access to specialist heritage expertise, volunteer recruitment and management and skills development for volunteers, tradespeople and specialists.

See **Box 3.2.3.A** for information on the outreach project.

Box 3.2.3.A

Protecting Victoria's heritage

Heritage Victoria is conducting a pilot of the heritage outreach project in south-west Victoria with the shires of Glenelg, Southern Grampians, Moyne, Corangamite and Colac-Otway and the City of Warrnambool. The pilot is enabled by the Government's heritage strategy *Victoria's Heritage: Strengthening our communities* and is supported by a number of complementary programs. The pilot program consists of the following elements:

Expert advice: collections conservation

Custodians of 25 community collections will receive expert advice about the conservation of their collections, comprising:

- information gathering by Heritage Victoria's outreach co-ordinator
- a full-day visit from Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation (CCMC) conservators
- a CCMC written report outlining priorities for conservation works, collection management issues, funding opportunities and skills-development workshops
- a review at the project's conclusion.

Volunteer recruitment and management

Volunteer recruitment is organised by Heritagecare (a complementary Heritage Victoria program) through two main processes: 'community stewardship' for long-term projects that focus on building volunteer skills and 'hands-on-heritage' for short-term projects for unskilled volunteers.

Skills development for volunteers

Museums Australia (Victoria) will provide series of five free training workshops in Colac and Hamilton to members of eligible community-collecting organisations in 2008. Topics include museum standards, significance assessment, interpretation and exhibitions, caring for collections and cataloguing.

3.2.3.3 OPPORTUNITIES FOR VETERAN -RELATED HERITAGE

The Veterans Council believes that given that the work of the Veterans Heritage Working Group is still underway, there is no need for any other Victorian Government action at this stage. Further action may be required to assist the Veterans Heritage Working Group in implementing any recommendations made to improve the care and preservation of veterans' related heritage.

3.2.4 PATRIOTIC FUNDS (ESO TRUST FUNDS)

3.2.4.1 CHALLENGES

A patriotic fund means 'any fund raised wholly or in part – by private or public subscriptions collections or contributions'. The *Veterans Act 2005* provides that funds be used for the 'relief, assistance or support' of service personnel or their dependants. Historically, this assistance has been termed 'welfare' by ESOs although this term does not appear in the Act. Traditionally, patriotic funds have been established or operated as two types of fund: 'building funds' and 'welfare funds'. However, this is also not provided for in the Act.

Not surprisingly, some veterans and ESOs are unclear about how patriotic funds can be used. Generally this relates to:

- whether funds can be used for contemporary welfare purposes, such as employing paid staff to perform services that volunteers once performed
- whether 'welfare funds' can be used to maintain buildings
- whether there are legislative and procedural restrictions to using the equity tied up in buildings for welfare purposes
- the requirements applying to patriotic funds to be closed
- whether or not membership fees raised are deemed as patriotic funds.

At least one ESO, and possibly others, was required to register as a patriotic fund some years ago, despite monies being raised through membership fees (rather than public or private subscriptions). Some ESOs were unclear about whether membership fees should be subject to the strictures that apply to the expenditure of patriotic funds.

Some ESO feel that seeking permission from the Director, Consumer Affairs Victoria to transfer all or any of the assets of a patriotic fund to the trustees of another patriotic fund is an unnecessary process, and that greater delegation of this authority to trustees should occur.

Some ESOs were concerned about the amount of time it takes to process an application to either spend patriotic funds, or transfer money between funds. One veteran said this process took up to six months 'regardless of whether the transaction involved \$5,000 or \$50,000'.

3.2.4.2 CURRENT ACTIVITY TO MANAGE PATRIOTIC FUNDS

ESO activity

The RSL Victorian Branch provides advice and guidance to sub-branches on the use and management of patriotic funds. The RSL is very close to formalising its revamped internal guidelines to help sub-branches manage the funds, especially with regard to transfer of monies between patriotic 'building' and 'welfare' funds and back again.

Victorian Government activity

Victoria is the only Australian state that regulates the management and dispersal of funds raised by public subscription for the benefit of veterans and, as a result, the only state to have such substantial assets and monies in this form. Regulation of the funds continues to be viewed as a positive for the sector.

Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) regulates the use of patriotic funds under the *Veterans Act 2005* and provides advice about their use and management. A dedicated officer is available to answer queries, manage applications and transactions and any follow-up required.

The Director, CAV, must approve transfers between funds, except where amounts are above \$50,000. These will be referred to the Veterans Council for advice.

In relation to a transfer from a fund to the trustees of a charitable trust, a charitable corporation or a Council:

- amounts greater than \$10,000 will be referred to the Council for advice to the Director, CAV
- amounts above \$50,000 in any six-month period require the approval of the Governor in Council on the recommendation of the Minister. In these instances, the Veterans Council would provide advice to the Minister, who would then advise the Governor in Council.

That there are very few transactions involving large amounts of money, with most being less than \$30,000.

Matters regarding the winding up of funds or transfers outside of these two categories generally involve advice to the Governor in Council on the recommendation of the Minister. Again, in these instances, the Veterans Council would provide advice to the Minister, who would then advise the Governor in Council.

The average turnaround time to approve applications to transfer patriotic funds is about three to four days from receipt. CAV reports that most transactions are very straightforward and the process is simple and quick. CAV sometimes needs to go back to the applicant for clarification of aspects of the application and this contact occurs within the same three or four day period. If any processing delays occur, these are due to a delay in CAV receiving the requested information from the fund trustee.

See **Box 3.2.4.A** for more information about the role CAV plays to support ESOs in relation to regulating patriotic funds.

Box 3.2.4.A

Consumer Affairs Victoria supporting ESOs

Improving the lines of communication

As the trustee of approximately 480 patriotic funds, the RSL is the organisation most frequently in contact with Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV), often many times each week. This contact is in relation to a range of matters including amalgamations and closure of funds, creation of new funds, fund data updates, more unusual fund transfer matters and compliance issues.

CAV has established direct lines of communication with the RSL, VVAA – Victorian Branch, Legacy branches, Carry On and other leading ESOs. These organisations contact CAV, and vice versa, on a regular basis on a range of matters.

Shortly after August 2006, when it took over responsibility for regulating patriotic funds, CAV circulated a telephone number to all patriotic fund trustees to encourage them to raise any questions or issues, and to facilitate the resolution of any matters as quickly as possible.

On a number of occasions CAV has met with representatives of ESOs to resolve queries and issues. These meetings have been well received and have generated successful outcomes for both parties.

Assisting ESOs with annual statements

Annual patriotic fund statements are due to be lodged with CAV by 31 March each year and are forwarded to trustees in the preceding December with a covering letter. In 2007 CAV issued two factsheets with the annual statements, to help trustees understand the facts about ways in which patriotic funds can be used.

For the lodgement of the 2007 annual statements, CAV introduced a number of initiatives that reduced the regulatory burden and the cost of compliance for trustees. These initiatives included a reduction in audit requirements, a reduction in the production of financial data for trustees that are incorporated associations, and streamlined annual statement forms.

The non-lodgement of statements, and queries that arise out of the lodgement of some statements, involves on-going follow-up work and contact with trustees. CAV has been successful in reducing the number of outstanding statements in 2007, and in following up all remaining non-compliance matters. This follow-up work also resulted in the closure of several funds that had effectively wound up operations.

3.2.4.3 OPPORTUNITIES FOR PATRIOTIC FUND MANAGEMENT

A level of distrust within the veterans' sector exists in relation to 'government wanting to take control of the patriotic funds'. The Veterans Council is well aware this is not the intention of the Victorian Government, nor does the Government have the ability to take control. In fact the proclamation of the *Veterans Act 2005* reaffirmed the Victorian Government's ongoing support and commitment to ensure that patriotic funds remain in the control of the veteran community, and continue to be set up and used for patriotic purposes.

It is entirely the responsibility of the trustees of the patriotic funds to determine, within the parameters of the Act, how funds are to be used. However, there is an apparent lack of understanding in the sector as to how it can use these funds under the Act. If such

funds were more readily accessed by ESOs to address contemporary welfare issues, the veteran community would be in a better position to support itself during this time.

One of the questions asked was whether the funds could be used to employ paid staff, such as coordinators to carry out the critical aged care tasks once performed by volunteers. Early legal advice has indicated that such expenditure, if deemed appropriate by trustees, is entirely appropriate under the Act.

Some ESO's need improved avenues to seek clarification and advice on the Act. As such, it is proposed that an information booklet be developed and distributed to the trustees of patriotic funds (see Recommendation 3 over page).

RECOMMENDATION 3

The Veterans Council recommends the Victorian Government supports patriotic fund holders and the veteran community to better understand patriotic funds and their use, as appropriate under the *Veterans Act 2005*.

It is proposed that:

- A. The Veterans Council, in partnership with Consumer Affairs Victoria and key ESOs, develops an information booklet, including questions and answers on how patriotic funds can be raised and appropriately used, and case studies on how funds are being used for contemporary welfare purposes.
- B. The Veterans Council, in partnership with Consumer Affairs Victoria, to conduct regular information sessions on the management and reporting requirements for patriotic funds.
- C. The Victorian Government considers a review the *Veterans Act 2005* to ensure there are no legislative barriers to improved flexibility, such as the ability to transfer monies between funds.

3.2.5 ORGANISATIONS DECIDING TO CLOSE OR MERGE

3.2.5.1 CHALLENGES

The small ESOs that support specific groups of World War II veterans will inevitably close operations as their members age and decline in numbers; for example, the Thirtyniners Association, which was set up to support service men and women who enlisted in the Australian Imperial Forces from 3 September to 31 December 1939.

ESO leaders estimate that one or two of these smaller organisations will close each year for the next five to 10 years. The RSL Victorian Branch also predicts that four or five smaller RSL sub-branches will also close or amalgamate in the next five to 10 years, particularly those in rural areas with members who are mainly World War II veterans.

Some smaller ESOs with a broader membership are also deciding to close operations because they are unable to recruit new volunteers to deliver services, their members are ageing and numbers declining, and they find it difficult to attract younger veterans. Other ESOs want to merge with like-minded organisations, but they don't know how to manage the process or where to seek support. Sometimes they are 'in denial' about the need to transition appropriately.

Significantly, the consequences are that many ESOs will not close properly and the assets and resources accumulated over many years may be lost. Some of the larger ESOs, such as the RSL, have given advice and support to their branches about closures and mergers, but further support is required to ensure all ESOs are receiving the help they need.

For smaller ESOs planning a dignified end, the process needs to include management and preservation of veteran-related heritage such as memorabilia, artefacts, honour boards, war memorials, avenues of honour, and, where possible, annual commemoration and education activities.

3.2.5.2 CURRENT ACTIVITY TO HELP CLOSURES AND MERGERS

ESO activity

The RSL continues to support its sub-branches when they want advice about closures or mergers. In response to a sub-branch deciding it was time to finish operations, the Friends of the RSL group charter was established as a by-law of the RSL Victorian Branch. This can now be adopted by other RSL sub-branches when the need arises. See **Box 3.2.5.A** for information about Friends of the RSL.

Box 3.2.5.A

Friends of the RSL keep the veteran spirit alive

In November 2004, member numbers at the Skipton RSL sub-branch were in decline. No recently returned servicemen or women were living in town and only a handful of World War II veterans remained as members. The sub-branch decided it was time to close, but the younger people of Skipton who valued their involvement in the annual Remembrance Day and ANZAC Day commemorations and helped maintain the local war memorial, showed interest in maintaining these activities.

The sub-branch secretary, Keith Pittman, contacted the RSL Victorian Branch asking how this community involvement could be formalised. In response, the Friends of the RSL group charter was established as a by-law of the RSL Victorian Branch, which can now be adopted by other RSL sub-branches when the need arises.

The RSL Victorian Branch prefers that sub-branches remain strong and relevant to the community, rather than close. But if this is not possible, the benefits of forming the Friends of the RSL group include a formalised closure, a focal point for commemorative events, keeping memorials in good order and, if the opportunity to apply for a government grant presents itself, a formal group is in place to seek, receive and manage the grant. In addition, veterans who remain in the local area can be satisfied that the important things still remain.

Commonwealth Government activity

As previously discussed, DVA's VAN is located across Victoria in its regional offices. VAN conducts regular regional forums to bring ESOs together to discuss a range of matters affecting veterans, service delivery matters, and sustainability challenges.

3.2.5.3 OPPORTUNITIES TO SUPPORT CLOSURES AND MERGERS

Apart from the RSL's service to its sub-branches, there is no specific support structure or comprehensive framework of advice to guide ESOs through a process of merging or closing. For ESOs not part of the RSL, little or no support exists to help them through their transition.

RECOMMENDATION 4

The Veterans Council recommends the Victorian Government supports ESO succession planning by providing access to information and professional advice on how to manage the legal, financial and other practical aspects of the process.

It is proposed that:

- A. The Veterans Council develops an information booklet about the options available to ESOs for managing succession. This would include advice and guidance on the necessary steps to implement their preferred course of action, and cover matters such as managing memorabilia, and merging or dissolving funds. Case studies of good practice, such as Friends of the RSL, would also be included.
- B. The Veterans Council is given resources to work with CAV to ensure ESOs have access to professional advice when dissolving patriotic funds.

3.3 VETERANS' HEALTH AND WELFARE SUPPORT

This section discusses the health and welfare challenges facing veterans, and makes four recommendations to address these challenges. It is important to note that health and welfare support for veterans is primarily the responsibility of the Commonwealth Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA). In comparison, the Victorian Government has a smaller but complementary role, particularly as a provider of services. As such, a number of the recommendations seek to better integrate government services at all levels.

3.3.1 HEALTH AND AGED CARE

3.3.1.1 CHALLENGES

In the survey conducted for this Report, many respondents agreed 'now is the time for the highest and most concentrated level of support for veterans and war widows'. These veterans have multiple and complex needs, and although DVA recipients receive a good level of care, it is important to remember that not all veterans and widows are DVA recipients. Equally, the services provided by DVA do not extend to areas such as social support.

Veterans identified access to quality health and aged care services, and facilities for crisis accommodation and high-care needs, as being critical concerns for their ageing population. Access to nursing home beds and capital improvements to nursing home facilities in need of repair were also high priorities.

3.3.1.2 CURRENT HEALTH AND AGED CARE SERVICE PROVISION

ESO activity

The RSL's aged and health support department provides advice and support to members of the veteran community, their families and carers. Professional staff have experience in aged care matters and can provide information about many health issues, particularly those related to the veteran community.

Through its network of sub-branches, Vietnam Veterans Association Victoria is active in community hospitals, aged care centres, hospital visitation programs, and makes donations to the veterans' psychiatric facility and veterans' aged care facilities at the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital. The Australian Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Veterans Association (APPVA) employs a full-time pension officer and advocate at the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital Veteran Centre (HRHVC). The veteran centre is primarily younger-veteran focused – see **Box 3.3.1.B** for more information about the welfare services APPVA provides.

Box 3.3.1.B

Australian Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Veterans Association welfare services - assisting veterans with compensation

During the past 18 months the APPVA pension officer at the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital Veteran Centre (HRHVC) has handled approximately 700 individual claims for compensation for 150 veterans, of which only four have been pre-1975 veterans (two of these were from the Malaya Emergency). Since the pension officer was appointed, the workload has significantly increased.

The client base is from around Australia, with interstate claims managed via telephone, post and Internet. Approximately 80 per cent of claims relate to physical injuries and 20 per cent to psychiatric injuries.

Veterans being supported mainly served in Cambodia, Namibia, Somalia, Rwanda, Timor, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Solomon Islands and Sumatra.

A smaller group of ADF members from the period 1975–1991 who saw little or no war/operational service and other ADF personnel that had accidents before gaining veteran status have also sought assistance.

Training and Information Program

The Training and Information Program (TIP) is a DVA-funded initiative that is managed in partnership with ESOs. It is highly valued in the veteran community. TIP provides training to volunteers who work in Veteran Support Centres (see section 3.6) and ESOs across Victoria, in three broad areas:

- compensation (pensions, income support and allowances)
- welfare (personal support and referral to professional assistance)
- managing the volunteer work environment.
- About 60 volunteers are trained each month and most are members of the ex-service community, particularly Vietnam veterans.

Victorian Government activity

The Victorian Government has allocated \$15.5 million for works at the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital, including \$14.5 million for the Centre for Trauma-Related Mental Health Services. The centre will replace existing psychiatry buildings and provide support to veterans who are being treated at the hospital's current Veterans' Psychiatry Unit. It includes a 20-bed unit for inpatient treatment and will also support other trauma survivors such as those affected by the Bali bombings and 2004 Boxing Day tsunami.

At the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital, the Victorian Government is also funding a health and rehabilitation centre, which is on track to be completed in 2009. This centre, which has also received funds from the Commonwealth Government, will include a new hydrotherapy pool and a redeveloped 'Kokoda Gymnasium'.

Veterans not eligible for Commonwealth DVA services can access those offered by Victoria's Department of Human Services (DHS). DHS is Victoria's largest government department and funds organisations such as hospitals, aged care facilities, ambulance services and community service agencies. See **Appendix I** for more information about DHS.

Primary Care Partnership (PCP) is a broad Victorian Government program focused on building relationships between service providers, improving coordination of services, integrating chronic disease management, and better health promotion. Service providers

can become PCP members (31 have now been funded) to improve relationships and achieve better health and wellbeing outcomes for the community (including veterans).

Commonwealth Government activity

DVA provides a comprehensive range of aged care and health services to eligible people including veterans, serving and former ADF members, war widows and widowers, certain Australian Federal Police personnel with overseas service, and dependants. For more information about these services, see **Appendix C**.

All ADF veterans 70 years of age and over with qualifying service are eligible for DVA's Gold Card. The Gold Card enables the holder to access, within Australia, the full range of repatriation health care benefits, including choice of doctor, optical and dental care, chiropractic services and pharmaceuticals at the concessional rate.

More than 280,000 Australian veterans and war widows currently hold a Gold Card, including 53,087 Victorians (as at December 2007).

Veterans 70 years of age and over who already receive a service pension through DVA are automatically issued with a Gold Card. Veterans who do not receive a service pension, but think they may be eligible for a Gold Card, are able to apply approximately four weeks before they turn 70.

3.3.1.3 OPPORTUNITIES FOR HEALTH AND AGED CARE SERVICE PROVISION

The Veterans Council believes a large range of remedial health and aged care measures are already in place through the Commonwealth and State government programs. Therefore no specific new action is required by the Victorian Government at this stage.

3.3.2 ACCOMMODATION

3.3.2.1 CHALLENGES

There is a lack of medium to long-term crisis accommodation for the small number of veterans with high and complex needs. Crisis accommodation services are supported under Commonwealth/state funding arrangements, but veterans do not receive priority access and are forced to wait along with other individuals in need.

Access for younger ex-service men and women to specialist disability care and support, including residential and in-home care services, is also limited under current Commonwealth/state funding arrangements. Veterans do not have priority access.

Further, a small number of older veterans care for their children with a disability. It is important that there is an appropriate form of specialist ongoing residential care for these children.

3.3.2.2 CURRENT ACTIVITY IN ACCOMMODATION PROVISION

ESO activity

Vasey RSL Care provides aged care services to veterans and war widows. Vasey Housing Ltd and the RSL Veterans and Widows Trust Ltd (trading as RSL Care Victoria) merged in 2004. Vasey RSL Care operates:

- six low-level residential aged care facilities (hostels)
- two high-level facilities (nursing homes)
- 18 Independent Living Units
- 65 Community Aged Care Packages (CACPs) which provide low-care services to clients in their own homes.

Carry On (Victoria) offers quality low-rental homes in retirement villages at Mildura, Ballarat, Reservoir, Noble Park, Rosebud and Geelong. This assistance is provided to members and former members of the defence forces who have served in war, peacekeeping duties or those who have been injured during training. Wives, widows and dependant children are also eligible for assistance.

Independent living accommodation for eligible veterans or their eligible relatives, in necessitous circumstances, is provided by the Royal Australian Air Force Veterans' Residences Trust, at concessional rent. The Trust maintains a total of 76 residences in Adelaide, Brisbane, Hobart,

Melbourne and Sydney. In Melbourne, ten one-bedroom, eight two-bedroom and two three-bedroom flats are maintained in Sandringham.

The Totally and Permanently Disabled Soldiers Association of Victoria offers respite units at Wahgunyah and Rye to members for respite accommodation.

The War Widows Guild of Australia (Victoria) and Melbourne Legacy help members to find appropriate accommodation.

Victorian Government activity

DHS provides secure, affordable and appropriate housing and support to low-income Victorians, along with accommodation and support for people who are experiencing, or are at risk of homelessness.

The Disability Housing Trust is a non-government charitable trust established to promote and develop new housing options and encourage new investment

in housing for people with disabilities.

The trust was launched in 2006 and has been provided with a \$10 million grant from the Victorian Government.

Commonwealth Government activity

DVA does not own housing stock or directly provide accommodation, but helps eligible veterans to obtain or maintain accommodation in either private or residential care settings. Services include rent assistance, subsidised home loans, home and contents insurance, an accident prevention program, and a home maintenance telephone line for advice on general property maintenance and referral to reliable and efficient local tradespeople. See **Appendix J** for more information on DVA accommodation services.

3.3.2.3 OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACCOMMODATION PROVISION

A small number of ESOs who operate aged care facilities and services could access capital funds from Victoria's Disability Housing Trust – if they want to provide innovative specialist housing for veterans or their dependants with a disability.

RECOMMENDATION 5

The Veterans Council recommends that the Victorian Government, with the Commonwealth Government and ESOs, address the accommodation needs of the state's veterans, war widows and their dependants.

It is proposed that:

- A. The Victorian Government partner with the Commonwealth and ESOs to ensure specialist housing is available for the disabled children of veterans.
- B. The Victorian Government, the Commonwealth and ESOs address the accommodation needs of younger and older veterans, war widows and dependants.

3.3.3 SOCIAL ISOLATION

3.3.3.1 CHALLENGES

Social isolation is an emerging issue for ageing veterans, as their social networks diminish with the passing of friends and spouses. Veterans in poor health and/or who lose their drivers' licence find it difficult to get out and about. This is particularly the case for veterans living in rural Victoria.

Many ESOs offer social activities and visitation services to house or hospital-bound veterans. However, due to the declining numbers and ageing of volunteers, it is difficult for ESOs to maintain these services at the time they are most in need.

3.3.3.2 CURRENT ACTIVITY TO ADDRESS SOCIAL ISOLATION

ESO activity

Most ESOs offer opportunities for their members to come together for social interaction. In fact, many veterans say social interaction was the main reason they joined an ESO many years ago. Social opportunities range from specially arranged events such as day trips, outings, lunches, dinners, or card games, to operational activities such as committee meetings, fundraising days and commemorative events (which result in incidental social interaction).

Victorian Government activity

The Victorian Government offers a range of sport and recreation programs, along with a number community networking opportunities, many of which focus on older Victorians.

Positive Ageing is a strategy aimed at maximising the quality of life and social recognition of senior Victorians. It recognises that seniors play many vital roles in the community: as family members, carers, volunteers, neighbours, workers and consumers. In 2004–05 the government provided \$5.1 million over four years for Positive Ageing initiatives to support current and future seniors.

Seniors Week offers a broad range of recreational programs across the state for older Victorians. See **Box 3.3.3.A** for information on the Seniors Week festival.

Box 3.3.3.A

Seniors Week festival - recognising the contribution of older people

Seniors Week festival aims to: recognise the valuable contribution that older people have made and continue to make to Victoria; promote healthy and active living to the state's 900,000 plus seniors, their families and friends as well as the wider community; and foster greater community understanding of seniors' interests and concerns.

The festival is a week-long celebration for seniors held each year. It includes hundreds of free or low-cost events, forums and activities across Victoria, as well as free public transport for Victorian Seniors Card holders.

For the purposes of the festival, seniors are considered to be people aged 60 years and over, who are not in full-time employment, and are therefore eligible for a Victorian Seniors Card. Entry to many of the festival's free and discounted events is via this card.

Men's Sheds: In 2007 the Victorian Government committed \$2 million towards Men's Sheds. Men's Sheds provide men with the opportunity to gather in their own space to talk, share skills, swap ideas, solve problems or just discuss life in general. See **Box 3.3.3 B** for more information on Men's Sheds.

Box 3.3.3 B

Men's Sheds initiative helps Australian men re-discover zest for life

In the past decade a wide range of community-based Men's Sheds have sprung up – a unique Australian phenomenon. The idea for these communal spaces came from the acknowledged Australian pastime of men spending time in their backyard sheds.

The common theme in all Men's Sheds is about men feeling useful and contributing again to their communities, learning and sharing their skills, making friends, networking and obtaining health information. Activities might include woodwork, metal work or restoration of old cars.

Men's Sheds are becoming recognised as vital, viable places to fulfil men's needs (particularly retired men) and relaxed, creative spaces for men to enjoy.

Men' Muster: With a similar theme to Men's Sheds, the Men's Muster near Wagga Wagga in NSW recently provided men aged over 55 (veterans and non-veterans) in the region an opportunity to come together, share experiences and look at improving support to each other, particularly to deal with the stresses of drought. Men had the opportunity to listen to speakers on a range of topics including depression, isolation and the importance of social connectedness; and to participate in discussions and recreational activities. In addition, the Men's Muster raised awareness of existing older men's groups in the area and helped them connect with each other.

Commonwealth Government activity

Day Clubs are community based, financially independent, not-for profit organisations run entirely by volunteers who ensure the successful functioning of the club. They offer a planned weekly program of social activities, gentle exercise, mentally stimulating activities and community involvement. They target older people (both veterans and non-veterans) who may be socially isolated or at risk of social isolation. No referral is necessary to attend a Day Club: anyone who is able to participate in the activities can attend.

Day Clubs rely on partnerships between ESOs, DVA, veterans and the broader community. ESOs have played a major role in the establishment and on-going functioning of Day Clubs. An ESO's sponsorship of a Day Club may constitute insurance, annual auditing of the club's books, a venue for meetings, subsidised morning teas and lunches, transport through use of an RSL bus or financial assistance for club celebrations.

3.3.3.3 OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

The veteran community tends not to access broader Victorian Government programs aimed at seniors. Many veterans are not aware of these programs and this means a more targeted approach to involving them is required.

More veterans around the state would like to access the highly regarded Day Clubs. To facilitate this, Day Clubs could be integrated with relevant and existing Victorian Government programs and initiatives, such as Victorian Seniors Week, to promote engagement and participation. Day Clubs could also be linked to Neighbourhood Houses, or the University of the Third Age (U3A) – an international organisation which provides lecture courses on a range of subjects to members who are mostly retired.

RECOMMENDATION 6

The Veterans Council recommends the Victorian Government strengthens its effort to address the social isolation of older people, particularly older veterans and war widows, and facilitates access to Neighbourhood Houses, Men's Sheds and other similar community organisations.

It is proposed that:

- A. The Victorian Government specifically targets veterans for involvement in Men's Sheds, and ensures transportation is available when required.
- B. The Victorian Government provides opportunities for older veterans to engage and socialise in a range of settings. This would include providing a focus for veterans in the annual Seniors Week festival, in Neighbourhood Houses, U3As and at senior citizen centres and clubs across the state.

3.3.4 MOBILITY

3.3.4.1 CHALLENGES

Being able to do everyday activities and staying part of the wider community are vital for veterans' wellbeing and social connectedness. Many veterans are now in their eighties and can no longer drive a car. The quality of life of these veterans is severely reduced if no viable transport alternatives exist. This is a particular concern in rural and regional areas, as well as Melbourne's outer metropolitan area, where fewer public transport services are available.

3.3.4.2 CURRENT ACTIVITY TO AID MOBILITY

ESO activity

The RSL Victorian Branch estimates that 20 of the larger RSL sub-branches offer a bus service to transport veterans and dependants; for example, to meetings at RSL Victorian Branch in Melbourne or to DVA medical appointments. Many smaller sub-branches run an individual service through volunteers and private cars.

Some ESOs share buses with other organisations; for example, RSL Healesville shares a bus with the local Rotary club. Other ESOs that do not own a bus often hire on a needs basis.

Victorian Government activity

Work is underway to overcome some of the barriers to accessing public transport through the Accessible Transport Victoria 2006–2012 action plan. This plan will address the Disability Discrimination Act (Cwth) compliance requirements and other accessibility issues.

Low-floor trams and buses are progressively being introduced to provide access for people using wheelchairs and mobility aids. Platform tram stops will enable faster and safer boarding and easier access. Improvements to ramps, handrails, seating and paving and installation of tactile indicators will help people with mobility and vision impairments.

Transport Connections: \$14.15 million has been allocated over three years for communities in rural, regional and outer metropolitan areas to work together to improve local transport.

Through local partnerships and use of existing assets and services, such as taxis, school buses, community buses and volunteers, communities will be encouraged to find ways to make participation in community life easier for people with limited access to transport.

Thirty Transport Connections projects have already been established across Victoria. A coordinator facilitates each project with the support of a local steering committee.

Multi Purpose Taxi Program (MPTP): this program helps those Victorians prevented from using public transport because of a severe and permanent disability to access subsidised taxi transport. MPTP members can travel in any licensed Victorian taxi and receive a subsidy of 50 per cent of the metered fare, up to a maximum of \$25 per trip.

Permanent residents of Victoria are eligible for the MPTP if they have a severe and permanent disability, which:

- severely limits mobility and prevents the use of public transport, and/or
- prevents independent travel on public transport.

For more information about MPTP eligibility, see **Appendix L**.

Free travel days: Veterans and war widows are provided with three free-travel days each year: the day before ANZAC Day, ANZAC Day, and the day after. The additional two free-travel days either side of ANZAC Day were introduced in 2005 to allow veterans and war widows to travel freely when meeting for reunions around ANZAC Day. When travelling on trains, trams and buses on these days, veterans and war widows only need to display a specified card, badge, medal or uniform that identifies them as a veteran.

Provided they are in uniform, Army and Air cadets, scouts, guides, and school students are also entitled to travel for free on public transport on the specified days around ANZAC Day.

Travel concessions: Since 2005 veterans with a DVA Gold or White Card (who do not have a Seniors Card, Pension Concession or Health Care Card) have been entitled to receive V/Line concessions. The Victorian Government also extended this concession to all public transport services, as part its broader policy to align concessions across all operators ahead of a new ticketing system.

Veterans can apply for a Victorian Public Transport Concession Card through the Central Pass Office (CPO). They can phone the office and have a form sent out to them (rather than travelling into the city). There is no cost to veterans to apply for the concession card. These cards will be valid for two years and will then be replaced by a new 'Smartcard' when available.

A Metlink Travel Pass provides free travel for all veterans who meet the following criteria:

- Veterans who have a disability pension of 75% or greater which affects their mobility,
- Veterans that are deemed TPI (Totally and Permanently Incapacitated), and
- Veterans that are Extremely Disabled (EDA).

Commonwealth Government activity

Mobility Allowance: Many veterans seem unaware of the Commonwealth Government's Mobility Allowance, which is claimed through Centrelink. This allowance is paid to people with disabilities, illnesses or injuries who are 16 years and over; can't use public transport without extra help because of their disability, illness or injury for 12 months or longer; and who, over a four week period, are doing at least 32 hours of voluntary work, paid work, training or any combination of these or have an agreement to look for work with an employment service provider and need to travel to and from their home as part of these activities.

3.3.4.3 OPPORTUNITIES TO AID MOBILITY

Many veterans in rural, regional and outer metropolitan areas of the state are unclear about what transport options are available, and where transport is lacking, who to approach to address the issue. Implementation of **Recommendation II** in section 3.6 will help to address this issue.

At this stage, the veteran community is not represented on any of the 30 Transport Connections committees across Victoria (working to address local transport issues). There are opportunities to link veterans into this initiative and others that are underway.

RECOMMENDATION 7

The Veterans Council recommends the Victorian Government improves the veteran community's access to broader community transport options, specifically helping ESOs who provide community transport to link with other community transport providers at a local level.

It is proposed that:

- A. The Victorian Government expands the Multi Purpose Taxi Program to provide access to all veterans and war widows from the age of 70. This would be in line with the Commonwealth Government's provision of Gold Cards to all veterans from the age of 70 with qualifying service.
- B. The Department of Planning and Community Development includes veteran representation on each of the 30 Transport Connections committees across Victoria and ensures the veteran community gains access to transport assets.
- C. The Veterans Council promotes the Commonwealth's Mobility Allowance to ESOs.

3.3.5 CONCESSIONS/RECIPROCAL TRANSPORT ARRANGEMENTS

3.3.5.1 CHALLENGES

There are a range of real and perceived anomalies in relation to veteran access to concessional arrangements across local, state and Commonwealth government jurisdictions.

Principally, this relates to the fact that there are different state and territory concessional arrangements more generally; and that states and territories have also extended eligibility to specific concessional arrangements for certain categories of veterans, such as Totally and Permanently Incapacitated (TPI) veterans. This is also exacerbated by the fact that at a local government level, some councils have provided discretionary concessions to veterans. This has led to a view that these arrangements could be applied either across states or nationally.

One such area is reciprocal transport arrangements between state governments. This relates to the differing concessions available in each state and territory for veterans when accessing public transport. See **Appendix K** for a list of the various concessions that apply.

Another example of an anomaly is that an ex-prisoner of war (who is eligible for a DVA Gold Card) is ineligible for the municipal rates concession. However, if the ex-prisoner of war dies, his widow becomes eligible for the concession as she is automatically entitled to the War Widows Gold Card from DVA – which entitles her to the municipal rates concession. About 350 ex-prisoners of war in Victoria are affected by this anomaly.

3.3.5.2 CURRENT CONCESSION POLICIES

The Victorian Government provides concessions to individuals who have been assessed by the Commonwealth Government as having a sufficiently low income and meeting other criteria to qualify for a Pensioner Concession Card or a Centrelink Health Care Card. Concessions are also provided to eligible holders of a DVA Repatriation Health Card (Gold Card).

Incapacitated veterans and war widows, pensioners, the unemployed, low-income families, single parents, and other people living on limited incomes benefit through reduced taxes, charges or bills. This improves the affordability of key services including energy, water, transport, health and other basic services.

It is estimated that about 28 per cent of the Victorian population, or 1.3 million Victorians, held a concession card as of December 2006. More than 45 per cent of cardholders are aged over 65 years, with the distribution of Victorian holders of Centrelink and DVA concession cards as follows:

- 32 per cent age pensioners
- 20 per cent parents and carers
- 15 per cent unemployed
- 13 per cent low-income earners
- 11 per cent disability pensioners
- 8 per cent DVA pensioners, veterans and war widows

3.3.5.3 OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONCESSION PROVISION

The Commonwealth Government has committed at the recent Federal election to ensuring reciprocal concessional arrangements for veterans. The Victorian Government should be able to work with the Commonwealth to achieve this and address any state-based anomalies in concession arrangements, so that veterans are clear about their eligibility and can travel interstate and receive similar entitlements.

RECOMMENDATION 8

The Veterans Council recommends the Victorian Government addresses existing anomalies in relation to veterans' concessions and supports consistent eligibility for concessions across Australian states and territories.

It is proposed that:

- A. The Victorian Government works with the Commonwealth and other state governments to achieve reciprocal concessions for veterans.
- B. The Victorian Government ensures ex-prisoners of war gain access to the municipal rates concession.
- C. The Victorian Government implements measures to standardise veterans and war widows' concessions across local government areas.

3.4 SUPPORTING COMMEMORATION ACTIVITIES

3.4.1.1 CHALLENGES

Commemoration activities such as ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day services are held across the state and in most rural and regional towns in Victoria each year. These are commonly held at sites of significance, such as the local war memorial or hall, and attended by veterans, local school children and members of the public. ESOs and community groups usually organise these activities, sometimes with local council support.

Many veterans are concerned about the sustainability of commemoration ceremonies and events. As some of the smaller ESOs in rural and regional towns close their operations, it is unclear who will organise the annual commemoration activities so important to the state's communities.

3.4.1.2 CURRENT COMMEMORATIVE ACTIVITIES

ESO activity

Legacy: Each year, Legacy hosts its annual ANZAC Ceremony for Students in the week before ANZAC Day. Approximately 3,000 students travel from all parts of the state to attend. 2008 marked the 76th anniversary of the event, and Yarra Valley Legacy arranged (and paid for) nine buses to transport 360 children from 18 schools to attend. The Governor of Victoria is the Patron for Melbourne Legacy and addresses the gathering of students.

RSL: The RSL organises Victoria's annual ANZAC Day parade and commemoration services. The Victorian Government and the City of Melbourne each provide \$50,000 to the RSL to stage these activities.

Shrine of Remembrance

The Shrine of Remembrance is Victoria's pre-eminent memorial: it is the state's primary venue for commemoration and the focal point for public education about the service and sacrifice of Victorians and the ANZAC spirit. More than 120 commemorative ceremonies are held at the Shrine of Remembrance each year (supported by the Shrine Trustees, Life Governors, Governors, Shrine Custodians and Shrine Guards).

Approximately 550,000 people visit the Shrine each year. Half of these visitors are Victorians and the majority participate in a short service of remembrance.

The Shrine has strong links to ESOs and has an ongoing campaign to raise awareness for major ceremonies and events at the Shrine. The Shrine also facilitates regular commemorative visits by overseas visitors and dignitaries.

Victorian Government activities

Victorian Veterans Fund: Managed by the Veterans Council, this fund provides grants of up to \$50,000 to ESOs for education and commemoration purposes. There have been 29 successful applications totalling \$343,480 in the inaugural round in 2007.

Restoring Community War Memorials: This grants program invites applications from ESOs, community organisations and local councils for funding to restore, enhance or protect Victorian war memorials and honour rolls. Grants of up to \$10,000 are available to

help repair, protect, restore and enhance war memorials and honour boards, and preserve the role they play in commemorative activities.

The 2007–08 funding round closed in February 2008. A total of 45 applications were received and 29 applications totalling more than \$182,000 were approved.

To date the program has resulted in almost 220 projects being approved for funding in places such as Beulah, Hawthorn, Morwell, Nagambie and Ballarat.

Other commemorative events: In 2007–08 the Victorian Government supported a service at the Shrine of Remembrance for the 65th anniversary of the Battle for Australia, which was attended by 3,000 veterans and school children.

The government also provided \$80,000 for an upgrade of the Australian Commando Memorial to World War II veterans at Tidal River at Wilson's Promontory National Park.

The government has also supported the creation of an annual Indigenous commemoration service at the Shrine of Remembrance to recognise the service of Victoria's Indigenous war veterans .

In 2008 events will take place such as the 90th anniversary of the end of World War I on 11 November 1918, and the 40th anniversary of the Battle of Coral-Balmoral, Vietnam 1968. See **Box 3.3.1.A** to for more information about the Victorian Government's support for the 90th anniversary of the Battle of Villers Bretonneux.

Centenary of ANZAC: The Victorian Government is committed to recognising the importance of the upcoming Centenary of ANZAC in 2015. This centenary will mark a defining moment in Australian history: the landing of Australian troops at ANZAC Cove, and the making of the ANZAC legend.

The Centenary of ANZAC offers all Australians the chance to recognise the sacrifice of those who served in World War I. Though the Centenary of ANZAC is still a few years away, the Victorian Government has recognised the importance of starting planning soon to ensure the milestone is commemorated appropriately.

Box 3.3.1.A

Victoria commemorates 90th anniversary of Battle of Villers Bretonneux

During World War I, the Germans captured the French town of Villers Bretonneux from British defenders on 24 April 1918. But thanks to Victorian and Western Australian forces co-ordinating a night attack to recapture the town, it was back in the hands of the Allied Forces by 25 April 1918.

To mark this occasion, the Minister Assisting the Premier on Veterans' Affairs, Tony Robinson, and the Leader of the Opposition, Ted Baillieu, represented the government and people of Victoria at important commemorative services held in France during April this year.

Minister Robinson and Mr Baillieu attended ceremonies that included the Dawn Service held at the Australian National Memorial in Villers Bretonneux, and a wreath laying at the Australian Digger Memorial on the outskirts of Bullecourt.

Other Australian Government representatives marked the occasion at Villers Brettoneux, including the Federal Minister for Veterans' Affairs, the Honourable Alan Griffin, MP and the Premier of Western Australia, the Honourable Alan Carpenter, MLA.

Commonwealth Government activity

DVA funds moderate-sized grants for events and activities aimed at promoting community participation in preserving veterans' heritage, including community war memorials and plaques. DVA also publishes commemorative publications, such as *The Sinking of the Centaur* which includes first-hand accounts from survivors. Further, the department supports commemorative annual events as well as special anniversaries such as the 40th Anniversary of the Battles of Coral and Balmoral, Vietnam.

3.4.1.3 OPPORTUNITIES TO SUPPORT COMMEMORATIVE ACTIVITIES

Even though smaller ESOs in rural and regional towns may need to close their operations, the annual commemoration events so important to these communities need not be compromised. 'Friends of the RSL' (see **Box 3.2.5.A** in section 3.2.5) is an excellent model for retaining commemorative activities once an ESO has wound up operations. Further uptake of new initiatives such as this one, will depend on improved communications between ESOs themselves and other stakeholders such as local councils.

The Veterans Council believes sufficient commemoration activities are in place at present, and hence no further Victorian Government action is needed at this stage.

3.5 IMPROVING PUBLIC EDUCATION PROGRAMS

3.5.1.1 CHALLENGES

Despite veterans observing that successful education programs are already operating, it was generally accepted that 'there could never be enough programs to focus on ensuring younger generations understood the history and the sacrifices made by earlier generations'. Although younger generations seem to have a resurgent interest in Australia's service history, there is also evidence of them having limited knowledge of Australian history, and of them being a difficult group to engage.

The Shrine of Remembrance recognises the need to grow its suite of programs to respond to growing public interest and demand, yet its current financial model is not sufficient to meet growing operational costs.

The Shrine Trustees have proposed the 'Galleries of Remembrance' project, which would see a substantial redevelopment of the Shrine to provide educational and exhibition facilities, along with an underground car park to cater for the anticipated increased patronage and movement of artefacts.

The Victorian Government has yet to articulate the current and future role of the Shrine of Remembrance in a policy context.

3.5.1.2 CURRENT EDUCATION INITIATIVES

ESO activities

Legacy: The National Junior Public Speaking Awards were established in 1988. In 2007, 152 schools throughout Victoria participated in regional and state finals with a national final held in Queensland. Melbourne Legacy also spends around \$30,000 each year assisting registered Legacy families with their children's education expenses.

VVAA Victoria: Every three years, two William Hacking Bursaries (William Hacking was the first Australian serviceman killed in Vietnam) are open to the dependants of Victorian-based Vietnam veterans who are undertaking tertiary studies in Victoria. The bursaries are for tertiary education, valued at \$3,000 per year for three years, and are dependant on successful completion of studies. Often successful bursary students are picked up by VVAA Victoria after they have unsuccessfully applied for a Long Tan Bursary, a DVA initiative (see **Box 3.5.1.C**).

VVAA Victoria regularly makes one-off grants of up to \$1,000 to help Victorian-based Vietnam veterans' children with the costs of tertiary schooling. Vietnam veterans are active in schools (predominantly secondary) and at community events, providing a wide range of education activities relating to the Vietnam conflict. During the past two years, education presentations have been delivered to more than 8,000 secondary school students.

Shrine of Remembrance: The Shrine's education program currently delivers a curriculum-based program to Victorian schoolchildren annually. It is delivered largely through the Shrine's annual fundraising initiatives and is strategically linked to the Shrine's commemoration role, exhibition and public programs. Since 2006, more than 30,000 Victorian schoolchildren each year have visited the Shrine and participated in the Shrine's education program activities.

Other current education and commemoration programs include:

- approximately eight exhibitions scheduled annually
- public lectures run throughout the year
- Shrine Young Ambassadors Program
- Shrine Adopt an Ex-Service Organisation Program
- monthly storytelling for children
- History of the Shrine travelling exhibition currently touring regional Victoria.

Veterans, historians, photographers, artists and other members of the community provide significant voluntary input to support these programs.

Victorian Government activity

Victorian Spirit of ANZAC Prize: This competition invites Year 9 students in Victorian schools to submit entries ranging from poems and essays to multimedia presentations, exploring what the Spirit of ANZAC means to young people. The objective of the Victorian Spirit of ANZAC Prize is to ensure that the ANZAC spirit lives on for future generations. By way of an overseas study tour to sites of significance for Australia's military campaigns, the Prize gives students, who travel with teacher chaperones, the chance to learn about Australia's heritage and the experiences of those who served Australia in times of conflict. To facilitate this learning process, all tours are led by a government representative. More than 750 Victorian students from schools across the state have participated in the competition since it began in 2004–05. As a result of the competition, 39 Victorian Year 9 students have been selected to participate in the 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008 tours that have visited battlefields in Europe and South East Asia.

Australian Centre for the Moving Image: ACMI conducts a regular digital short stories program in which it works with community groups and individuals to help un-tap their personal stories. These three to four minute stories are produced in DVD format. Working with ACMI could be one way for veterans to record their personal experiences, thereby creating a valuable resource for the wider community. Veterans have recorded their personal stories over the years in books, diaries, and in various multi-media formats. The

ACMI program provides a unique opportunity for veterans to work with family members, and students, to tell a Victorian specific story, about the impact of war on their lives, their families and their local towns. Importantly these short stories, on agreement with the storyteller, will be made available for viewing at ACMI, the Shrine, on the internet, and shown at special ESO screenings.

See **Box 3.5.1.A** for more information.

Box 3.5.1.A

ACMI: everyone has a story to tell

Digital stories are autobiographical 'mini movies' created and edited by everyday people – using computers, cameras, scanners and photos.

A three-day workshop to create these stories is open to everyone and there are no technical prerequisites. Participants record their own personal voice over, and by learning basic photo manipulation and film editing, they create a digital story about a significant moment in their lives.

Support for the Shrine of Remembrance:

The Victorian Government has a long history of supporting the Shrine of Remembrance: it provides ongoing operating funding to the value of approximately \$1.1 million every year through the Department of Planning and Community Development, Department of Treasury and Finance and the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

In addition, the government has:

- allocated \$380,000 in one-off funding to the Shrine's education program.
- allocated \$200,000 from 2007-08 to help replace the Shrine's public address system
- previously allocated \$500,000 to help the Shrine build an education centre (which opened in 2005) to meet demand and to deliver the Shrine's high-quality education program.

In 2007 the government established the Shrine Redevelopment Working Group to consider all matters relating to the Shrine's proposed redevelopment. See **Box 3.5.2.B** for further information on the role of the Working Group.

Box 3.5.2.B**Enshrining our war history for future generations**

Ensuring that our war history is preserved for future generations is an important mission for the Shrine of Remembrance in Victoria.

As part of this, the Shrine Redevelopment Working Group was established in 2007 to work alongside the Shrine Trustees to develop a plan for further development of the Shrine, including the proposed 'Galleries of Remembrance' project.

The work is being undertaken on the basis that the proposed redevelopment is contingent on Commonwealth funding, which is yet to be confirmed.

Members of the working group include:

- Chair, Minister Assisting the Minister for Veterans Affairs
- Department of Treasury and Finance
- Department of Premier and Cabinet
- Department of Sustainability and Environment
- Arts Victoria
- Shrine of Remembrance
- Royal Botanic Gardens
- City of Melbourne
- Department of Planning and Community Development.

It is envisaged the working group will provide a detailed report to the Premier about the proposed redevelopment of the Shrine that will address each of the issues identified and provide specific recommendations to the Victorian Government.

Parliamentary review of ANZAC Day laws: In 2002 this review was undertaken with the aim to further strengthen ANZAC Day as a national day of commemoration. This involved considering the most suitable legislative framework, appropriate administrative processes, and education initiatives relating to the promotion of ANZAC Day.

The final report concluded that some of the laws were anomalous (e.g. a fine of only \$500 being an inadequate penalty for commercial cinemas that illegally open on ANZAC Day), while other areas of the law seemed too narrow (e.g. the ANZAC Day Act should not refer solely to World War I) or even silent (gaming venues should be covered by the Act and not allowed to open on the morning of ANZAC Day). This report provides the basis for any further analysis related to modernising the ANZAC Day Act 1958, and broadening the Shrine's role.

Commonwealth Government activity

DVA publishes a range of resource kits for schools on Australian war-time history, most recently Australian Women in War. DVA provides online information about key veterans' events, such as ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day, as well as snapshots from Australia's major campaigns. DVA hosts a number of school competitions that encourage research, such as the National History Challenge, and commemorative activities.

The Long Tan Bursary is an initiative of the Australian Government through DVA and is administered by the Australian Veterans' Children Assistance Trust (AVCAT). The bursary was established in August 2000 to help eligible children of Vietnam veterans meet the cost of tertiary education and help them obtain the formal qualifications and skills needed to pursue their chosen careers (see **Box 3.5.2.C**).

Box 3.5.2.C

Long Tan Bursary gives a helping hand to disadvantaged students

Fifty bursaries worth \$9,000 over three years are available to eligible students across Australia every year. Bursaries are distributed proportionally across all states and territories.

The bursary is named after the Battle of Long Tan, a battle fought by Australians during the Vietnam War.

Long Tan Bursary applicants must:

- be the child of an Australian Vietnam veteran
- have Australian residency status
- be planning to enrol or be enrolled in tertiary education in Australia, in an approved course of one or more academic year's duration. Tertiary education is considered to include vocationally-oriented courses such as those at TAFE, business college or art school.
- be in needy circumstances such as financial need, health and other non-financial family and personal circumstances where these circumstances could prevent the applicant from undertaking tertiary education. The test for financial need is eligibility on financial grounds for Youth Allowance educational benefits
- not be a previous recipient of a Long Tan Bursary.

3.5.1.3 OPPORTUNITIES TO STRENGTHEN EDUCATION INITIATIVES

Teachers, students, and the general community are becoming increasingly interested in Australia's war-time history, and in particular the ANZAC experience. This warrants the integration of a more comprehensive ANZAC education component into the school curriculum. It is important that sustainable education programs are in place to continue to educate the community about veterans' service to the nation. In addition, building on and strengthening the activities of ESOs working with and presenting to schools is a priority.

The Veterans Council recognises that the Shrine of Remembrance plays a pivotal role in providing education programs to the community about Victoria's and Australia's war-time history. The Shrine also continues to establish and build important relationships with Victoria's veteran community.

An important aspect of strengthening the Shrine's role both now and into the future (in terms of education, commemoration, and any expanded function) will be the establishment of a comprehensive policy framework articulating the Shrine's current and future role, in a broader State Government policy context.

The Shrine's current business model will also need to be reviewed, with the aim to establish a more sustainable model to meet current and future operational demands. This review should consider appropriate ongoing Victorian Government financial support.

The *Shrine of Remembrance Act 1978* will also need to be examined and reviewed.

As part of the broader education agenda, capturing the personal stories of veterans and digitising unit histories would create a valuable resource for the Victorian community. These stories could be made available on a single website linked to other key veteran-related websites. This website could also include the results of the Veteran Related Heritage Survey and Traveller's Guidebook, for example.

There is also an opportunity to raise awareness about the ANZAC Centenary through the various education programs in place.

RECOMMENDATION 9

The Veterans Council recommends the Victorian Government strengthens its current education programs to inform the community about the contribution of veterans in their service to the nation, with new initiatives in the lead up to the Centenary of ANZAC in 2015.

It is proposed that:

- A. The Veterans Council establishes arrangements to coordinate community education programs across Victoria that relate to the ANZAC spirit and Australia's war-time history.
- B. The Victorian Government, in consultation with the Veterans Council, introduces a Spirit of ANZAC program to assist selected teachers involved in Australia's war-time history education.
- C. The Victorian Government, in consultation with the Veterans Council, develops relevant curriculum materials to support teachers in the delivery of war-time history education.
- D. The Victorian Government, in consultation with the Veterans Council, develops curriculum materials to support ESO presentations in schools, which link to the above mentioned war-time history program and allows for injection and sharing of personal stories (the strength of the current ESO approach).
- E. The Victorian Government, in consultation with the Veterans Council, extends the Spirit of ANZAC Prize to include a trip to the Australian War Memorial for the finalists who are not selected for the overseas trip.
- F. The Victorian Government implements measures to strengthen the Shrine education program as the pre-eminent focus for military/veteran-related education for schools and the general community; and ensures this is linked to the Essential Learning Standards Curriculum.

- G. The Department of Planning and Community Development in partnership with the Australian Centre of the Moving Image (ACMI) and the Shrine captures the personal stories of veterans through digital story telling.
- H. The Department of Planning and Community Development digitises unit histories and ensures they are more readily available via a website connected to existing veteran-related websites.

RECOMMENDATION 10

The Veterans Council recommends the Victorian Government takes action to strengthen the role of the Shrine of Remembrance.

It is proposed that:

- A. The Victorian Government establishes a policy framework that articulates the current and future role of the Shrine of Remembrance (in terms of education, commemoration, and any expanded function).
- B. The Victorian Government reviews the Shrine's business model to ensure a sustainable model underpins the Shrine's current and future role.

3.6 ACCESSING VETERAN-SERVICES INFORMATION

Access to information is a critical issue for Victoria's veterans and their organisations. In fact, a more comprehensive approach to communication across the veterans' sector will be needed for the identified challenges in this Report to be adequately addressed.

3.6.1.1 CHALLENGES

There are three types of information and communication challenges for the veteran community. The **first** relates to the difficulty individual veterans face to learn about what services are available to them through ESOs and governments. The **second** relates to communication of information, sharing of ideas and examples of good practice between ESOs. The **third** relates to the difficulty ESOs

experience to discover what opportunities and services exist to support them, beyond what is on offer through DVA, such as state government programs and initiatives. As such:

Veterans need clear, relevant, up-to-date information about support and services available to them. Like the general community, veterans find navigating their way through the maze of federal, state, and local government service systems confusing. This causes a lack of understanding about what support is available. The problem of complex service systems is the perennial problem of public administration, successive Commonwealth and state governments continue to struggle with ways to address this.

- While very good partnership models already exist for information provision to veterans, such as the Veterans Support Centres (between the VVAA and RSL), many service providers are not linked to these structures. Hence, veterans may not know where else to go to learn about other services. There is no overarching communication and coordination approach or process for all ESOs to engage with each other and all veterans across Victoria.
- ESO leaders often believe the challenges they face, such as declining volunteer numbers and membership, are unique to the veterans' sector; but these challenges and many others are common issues across the not-for-profit sector. Connecting with other community organisations will help ESOs to tap into ideas, strategies and resources to deal with common challenges. Many ESOs are concerned about their ability to remain relevant to the local community, and are uncertain how to do this.

Furthermore, in some instances, veterans are uncertain as to whether they are eligible for particular DVA benefits. Where eligibility requires working through lengthy application forms, many veterans find them to be too complex, and need help to complete them.

3.6.1.2 CURRENT WAYS TO COMMUNICATE SERVICE OPTIONS

ESOs as well as local, state and federal government agencies offering support have different mechanisms for communicating their services to the community. Some of this information is available on respective agency websites, booklets, through a telephone service, or by provision of staffed 'shop fronts' open to the public.

ESO activity

Aged care coordinator: In 2006 the RSL, with funding support from DVA, piloted the appointment of a part-time aged care coordinator for 12 months. This position was housed and managed by the Geelong RSL sub-branch. The aged care coordinator, who was well-briefed on aged care programs and services, provided a much-needed contact point for veterans and their dependants in the context of an ageing population and a decline in the number of volunteers who would have previously performed this task.

The RSL and DVA assessed the position as being highly valuable and effective, with feedback at the Geelong Focus Group outstandingly positive. The challenge to the RSL is to sustain these coordinators now that the Commonwealth Government's 12-month funding agreement has ceased. These positions may be placed within an RSL or there may be other models for different regions across the state.

Veterans Support Centres: Approximately 28 Veterans Support Centres have been set up across Victoria, and are mostly housed in RSL sub-branches. The centres are a partnership between the VVAA and RSL, and are supported by DVA through an annual grant. These centres provide financial counselling and assistance, job seeking assistance, visits for veterans and widows in hospitals and nursing homes, and help to complete pension and compensation claims. Paid welfare officers also provide information about DVA welfare support. See **Box 3.6.A** for more information.

Box 3.6.A

Facts about Veteran Support Centres

Approximately 28 Veteran Support Centres have been set up across Victoria (the model is now going national) and most are located at RSL sub-branches. The Support Centres:

- originated 10–15 years ago as an initial joint effort between VVAA and RSL. This partnership worked because VVAA had the volunteers to run them and RSL had the funds to support them.
- are located in most of the main regional centres including Sale, Bendigo, Wodonga and Leongatha, as well as metropolitan locations including Heidelberg, Edithvale, and Oakleigh.
- were originally set up to help with claims for compensation, but have expanded since then.

DVA's Best Grants fund the centres, paying for an administration support worker, but beyond this Centres must find an office and be self-sufficient.

Funding is non-recurrent, but grants of \$40,000–\$50,000 a year are available through the application process,

DVA provides computer software, yearly evaluation reports, and the Training and Information Program (TIP) three-day course.

TIP staff help veterans to complete claim/pension forms.

The Support Centres:

- have a welfare worker to do home visits, and provide information and assistance on welfare support (welfare support does not include emergency relief, but rather informal advocacy).
- report to a national director in DVA.
- are run by a volunteer committee.
- are supported by volunteers, most of whom are VVAA members.
- The Sale Veteran Support Centre provides an excellent case study of how well these centres can run. The Bendigo and the Oakleigh centres are also excellent models, among others.

Victorian Government activity

The Office of Senior Victorians (OSV) funds the Council on the Aged (COTA) to provide a telephone information service for older Victorians seeking information on OSV and COTA services.

Commonwealth Government activity

DVA produces its annual 'blue book' listing all federal, state and local government programs. These books, plus other information on DVA support, are available at Veteran Support Centres across Victoria (and Australia).

3.6.1.3 OPPORTUNITIES TO COMMUNICATE SERVICE OPTIONS

There is no 'single point of entry' to communicate the range of services on offer to the veteran community. Many ESOs and veterans are unaware of the range of services available to them.

RECOMMENDATION 11

The Veterans Council recommends the Victorian Government take action to improve the knowledge and understanding of the veteran community about available programs and services to support the needs of veterans and their dependants.

It is proposed that:

- A. The Veterans Council conduct regular 'communication forums' across Victoria for ESOs and the veteran community, which would focus on information sharing about available services and support, along with examples of good practice. This would also involve bringing together DVA's Veterans' Affairs Network, Department of Planning and Community Development, Consumer Affairs Victoria and local government staff.
- B. The existing VVAA/RSL Veteran Support Centre network is built upon to create a 'one stop shop' portal at a local level, to provide information to Victorian veterans on federal and state government and ESO services.



APPENDIX A

VICTORIAN VETERANS ACT 2005

Part 1—Preliminary Matters

Section 3

Act No. 98/2005

'Veteran' means a person who performed service or duty and who now resides in Victoria but does not include current members of the Australian Defence Force rendering continuous full time service.

'Service or duty' means:

- (a) any naval, military or air service in any proclaimed war; or
- (b) any special defence undertaking within the meaning of section 6 of the Defence (Special Undertakings) Act 1952 of the Commonwealth; or
- (c) any peacetime activities, including peace keeping activities; or
- (d) any training activities, including activities conducted in conditions simulating war or war-like activities – engaged in by an officer or a member of the naval, military or air forces of Her Majesty or of the Commonwealth of Australia or of any of the naval, military or air forces of Her Majesty's allies that are authorised expressly or impliedly or are incidental to the scope of service or duty of the officer or member.

APPENDIX B

RSL MEMBERSHIP TYPES

- **Service Membership** of the RSL is for anyone who is currently serving or has served in the ADF or any of Australia's allied armed forces. Service membership offers serving and ex-serving personnel mateship and comradeship with others of similar life experiences.
- **Affiliate Membership** is a type of RSL membership that caters for family members of serving and ex-service men and women. It is also for members or ex-members of the police, fire brigade, ambulance and SES. Its purpose is to provide a form of RSL membership that maintains the 'bloodlines' of those who have served their country in both peace and war.
- **Social/Community/Student Membership** is for those that would like to be a part of their local RSL sub-branch on a social level. This Membership allows for access to the venue for social purposes without the need to sign in. This Membership provides for the same benefits as Service and Affiliate members, however, the right to vote on RSL matters does not apply.
- **Honorary Life Members** those who have given long, continued and outstanding service to the League, can be nominated for and elected by the National Executive to the class of Life Member. The rights, privileges and obligations of a Service Member elected as a Life Member shall not be disturbed by their election to that class, save and except that they shall not be liable to pay any annual subscription either to the league, a state branch or a sub-branch, as the case may be (as per RSL National Constitution Rule 13.4).
- **Being a Life Subscriber** means that an upfront application payment has been submitted, eliminating the need for yearly membership fee payment. This membership type is for life. Both Service and Affiliate members are eligible to apply to become Life Subscribers.

APPENDIX C

COMMONWEALTH DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS SUPPORT

The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) provides income, information, health and aged care support to eligible veterans and war widows. DVA also supports commemorative activities.

INCOME SUPPORT

Pensions

A service pension provides a regular income for people with limited means. A service pension can be paid to veterans on the grounds of age or invalidity, and to eligible partners, widows and widowers. It is subject to an income and assets test.

The age service pension is paid to veterans five years earlier than the age pension paid by Centrelink, recognising that the effects of war service may be intangible and result in premature ageing and/or loss of earning power.

However, the invalidity service pension may be granted at any age before the person turns 65.

A service pension can be paid to Australian veterans and mariners, Commonwealth veterans, and Allied veterans and mariners who have qualifying service.

Income support supplement (ISS) provides a regular income additional to the war widow's pension for Australian war widows and widowers with limited means. It is also subject to an income and assets test.

Allowances payable in association with the service pension and ISS include pharmaceutical allowance, rent assistance, telephone allowance and remote area allowance.

Pensions – disability compensation

A disability pension is a tax-free benefit paid to Australian veterans who have had an illness or injury accepted by DVA as being caused by their service.

The rate of disability pension payable depends on how severe the illness or injury is. Veterans who are unable to work solely because of the effects of their service-related disabilities may be paid a pension at the Special Rate (also known as T&PI).

Allowances, which can be paid in association with a disability pension, include contributions to the cost of pharmaceuticals and recreational transport, and recognition of certain medals and decorations.

Pensions – war widows and widowers

The war widow's pension is paid to the partners of deceased veterans who had been receiving Special Rate pension, or were former prisoners of war, or whose deaths have been accepted as service related. Pension can also be paid to dependant children of deceased veterans.

VETERANS' AFFAIRS FINANCIAL INFORMATION SERVICE

Veterans' Affairs Financial Information Service (VAFIS) provides a free service to help clients improve their standard of living by using their own money to best advantage.

VAFIS can provide information on a wide range of things such as:

- the advantages and disadvantages of different types of investments
- how income stream products work, including superannuation
- how employment may affect pension entitlements
- basic taxation issues such as rebates, imputation and capital gains tax.

Information is available over the telephone, or in person by appointment at either a DVA office or other mutually convenient location.

Note: This service is only provided by DVA in Victoria. A similar service is provided by Centrelink for all other states.

APPENDIX C CONT.

HEALTH CARE

A broad range of health care and support services is available to eligible veterans and eligible dependants. Various health service providers provide these services on behalf of DVA.

Health care and support services include:

- general practitioner services
- specialist services including pathology and radiology
- podiatry, physiotherapy and other allied health services
- dental care
- community nursing
- spectacles and hearing aids
- care in public and private hospitals
- home support services.

Holders of a Gold Card (the Repatriation Health Card – for all conditions) are entitled to the full range of health care services at DVA's expense including medical, dental and optical care. They are also entitled to aids and appliances to help them, for example, to remain in their home.

Holders of a White Card (the Repatriation Health Card – for specific conditions) are entitled to the full range of health care services at DVA's expense but only in respect of those disabilities or illnesses accepted as service-related. A White Card may also be issued for treatment for non-service-related cancer, pulmonary tuberculosis, post-traumatic stress disorder, clinical depressions or severe anxiety disorders, or the symptoms of unidentifiable prescribed conditions.

HOUSING

The Defence Service Homes (DSH) scheme provides financial benefits in the form of a subsidised housing loan to service men and women (and certain dependants) who have completed a qualifying period of service in the defence force in either wartime or peacetime. The maximum amount of the loan is \$25,000 repayable over 25 years.

DSH also offers home and contents insurance to eligible people regardless of whether they have a DSH loan.

COUNSELLING

The Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VVCS) is a specialised, free and confidential counselling service for veterans, their wives or partners, and dependant children. It is open to veterans of all conflicts and peacekeeping operations. VVCS provides individual, couple and family counselling as well as lifestyle management programs, information and education.

COMMEMORATION

Commemoration is an important way for all Australians to recognise and honour the service and sacrifice of the nation's servicemen and women in times of war or conflict.

Through the Saluting Their Service program, DVA conducts or assists a wide range of commemorative activities in Australia or overseas that acknowledge the debt that is owed to those who helped preserve the freedoms that all Australians enjoy today. The program, which began in 2002, also assists communities to restore or construct local war memorials that are the focus of their commemoration services.

Through Saluting Their Service, educational activities assist the community, especially young Australians, learn how the experiences of those who have served in Australian defence forces have impacted on the development of the nation.

FACT SHEETS

The following fact sheets are available for further information about DVA services:

- Service Pension Overview: IS 01
- Income Support Overview: IS 03
- Overview of Disability Pension and Allowances: DP 01
- Defence Service Home Loans: HAC 01
- Defence Service Home Insurance: HAC 02
- Information for Veterans, their Families and Other Users of VVCS: VCS 01
- Overview of Health Services available to the Veteran Community: HSV 01
- Overview of Saluting Their Service: COM 01

These fact sheets are available on request from any DVA office or on the DVA website at www.dva.gov.au/factsheets/default.htm Phone 133 254 for general inquiries, or 1800 555 254 for non-metropolitan callers.

APPENDIX D

VICTORIAN STATE-LEVEL EX-SERVICE ORGANISATIONS

ESO	Part of national association	Vic regional branches	Members Victoria	Members Australia
Returned and Services League	Yes	307	34,537	165,225
Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia (Vic Branch)	Yes	18	2500	6500
*Legacy	Yes	9	725	5,600
Vietnam Veterans Federation	Yes	3	400	9,000
Totally and Permanently Incapacitated	Yes	Social clubs – 18	3,636	14,431
Extremely Disabled Association Services	Yes	1	1023	5000
National Servicemen's Association of Australia (Victorian Branch)	Yes	25	2,780	13,500
Australian Legion of Ex-Servicemen and Women	Yes	12	1500	5000
Australian Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Veterans Association	Yes	7 areas not sub-branches	221	1,000
Carry On	No	6	97	0
Naval Association of Australia	Yes	13	1,750	5,000
Regular Defence Force Welfare Association	Yes	1	1,000	7,000
*Vasey RSL Care	No	1	n/a	n/a
Returned Services Nurses Association of Australia	No (sub-branch of RSL)	As per RSL	As per RSL	As per RSL
Royal Australian Air Force Association	Yes	12	898	11,000
War Widows Guild of Australia	Yes	11	3,621	30,000
War Widows and Widowed Mothers Association	No	22	2500 approx.	–
Prisoner of War Association (part of national organisation) and Ex Prisoners and Relatives Association (not part of national organisation)	Yes	2	377	1683
The Partners of Veterans Association of Australia Inc (Victorian Branch)	Yes	6	300	2,500

*Please note:

1. The term 'membership' for some ESOs, such as Legacy refers to the workers (volunteers) that support the 'clients' (eligible widows, children and disabled dependants). Therefore, although Legacy 'membership' is less than 10,000 (placing it in the medium sized ESO category), Australia-wide Legacy has 120,000 widows registered that it is committed to supporting and in Victoria, the figure is around 34,000.

2. Vasey RSL Care Ltd, not strictly an ESO, is a not-for-profit public benevolent institution (PBI) formed in July of 2004 following the merger of Vasey Housing

and RSL Care (Vic). Its core business is the provision and facilitation of high quality residential services and community aged care services to support war widows, veterans and the ex-service community.

Vasey RSL Care provides accommodation and service options that facilitate mutual support, and meet the needs for security and dignity of the ex-service community

Residential Care is offered as a priority to war widows, veterans and their dependants, with applications from the general public welcome.

APPENDIX E

GRANTS PROGRAMS

COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT

BEST Grants

(Building Excellence in Support and Training)

This program allocates funds to ESO practitioners for their pensions and welfare work for veterans, past and present members of the Australian Defence Forces and their dependants. It aims to ensure high quality claims and appeals assistance by ESO practitioners, which in turn will assist the Department of Veterans' Affairs in timely and appropriate processing. Funding assistance can be provided for:

- Salary costs of full or part-time practitioners by ESOs.
- Salary costs of full or part-time administrative support staff.
- Computer equipment which is used to assist ESO practitioners.
- Consumables, running costs, and other costs relating to lodging claims and appeals.

Saluting their Service Commemoration Grants Program

This program supports projects and activities that directly commemorate Australia's servicemen and women who served in wars, conflicts and peace operations and that seek to promote appreciation and understanding of the role these men and women played in shaping the nation. Potentially eligible projects include:

- Community war memorials (including improving access to, or the safety of, a war memorial) commemorative plaques and honour boards, with maximum grants of \$4,000 available.
- Commemorative events with maximum grants of \$3,000 available for activities such as reunions, anniversaries or ceremonies.
- Public awareness activities, such as publishing a unit wartime history. Again, maximum grants of \$3,000 are available.
- The restoration, preservation and/or display of wartime memorabilia, with maximum grants of \$3,000 available.
- School initiatives, such as research projects involving local veterans, with maximum grants of \$3,000 also available.

Veteran and Community Grants

These grants provide funds for projects that aim to support healthy, quality lifestyles for members of the veteran community and assist them in remaining living independently in their own homes. Funds available are generally within the range of \$2,000 to \$50,000 and initiatives looking to reduce social isolation, support carers, and improve access to community care services can also be funded under this program.

Grants-in-Aid Program

This program assists national ex-service organisations with their administration costs in recognition of the services that they provide to the ex-service community. Initiatives that may be funded include specific administrative functions, travel on Department of Veterans' Affairs-associated business, office equipment, and lobbying undertaken on behalf of the veteran community.

For further information about the Commonwealth Government Grants available from the Department of Veterans' Affairs, visit: www.dva.gov.au/grants/index.htm

VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT

ANZAC Day Proceeds Fund

The ANZAC Day Proceeds Fund, which is dedicated to the welfare of the veterans community, is distributed by the Victorian Veterans Council. Funding is derived from money raised at sporting events on ANZAC Day and its primary purpose is to provide practical assistance for veterans and their dependents who are in need. The fund is distributed to organisations whose principal object is to provide welfare support to veterans or their dependants.

Victorian Veterans Fund

The Victorian Veterans Fund is also managed by the Victorian Veterans Council. This fund provides grants towards education and commemoration activities to heighten the veteran community's capacity to:

- Honour or commemorate the service or sacrifice of veterans;
- Educate Victorians about the history of service in conflicts, including peacekeeping and peacemaking operations; and
- Assist with the education of veterans' dependants.

Grants of up to \$50,000 are available.

APPENDIX F

Restoring Community War Memorials Grants Program

This program supports Victorian communities in maintaining or restoring local war memorials and honour rolls. ESOs, community organisations and local councils can apply for funding with grants of up to \$10,000 available to help repair, protect, restore and enhance their local memorials and honour rolls, thereby preserving the role they play in commemorative activities.

VICTORIAN COMMUNITY SUPPORT GRANTS

While not targeted specifically toward the veteran community, this program is also available to eligible community organisations, local government and philanthropic organisations for the common goal of building stronger, active and more inclusive communities.

There are three categories of grants available: planning, strengthening communities, and building community infrastructure. Funds available for approved projects vary based on the maximum amount of funding available within that category, as well as the level of contributions from partner organisations and other sources.

For further information about the Victorian Government grants available, visit: www.grants.dpcd.vic.gov.au

RSL WELFARE STUDY

The *Study of the Responsibilities of the RSL Victorian Branch for the Delivery of Welfare Support* was presented to the RSL State Executive in November 2004.

The main purpose of the recommendations in this report is to ensure that there is improved:

- coordination of welfare support
- training to enhance the skills of welfare and pensions officers
- improved access and referral pathways to community based services
- improved communication between state branch welfare officers and sub-branch welfare officers
- improved future planning and coordination of services
- consistent record keeping and data collection
- support to small sub-branches through improved resource allocation on a needs basis
- coordination of home and Hospital visiting authorisation and identity badges between state branch and sub-branches
- improved coordination and communication between state branch and sub-branches of welfare grants and vouchers issued by the branch
- development of a volunteer strategy for sub-branches
- coordinated advocacy between state branch and other major service providers.

APPENDIX G

AUSTRALIAN PEACEKEEPER AND PEACEMAKER VETERANS' ASSOCIATION

The Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans' Association (APPVA) was formed in 1997 and is a veteran not-for-profit association servicing Australian and New Zealand personnel involved in warlike and non-warlike operations including peacekeeping, peacemaking, United Nations contingents, military observers, truce supervision, emergency forces, special commissions, humanitarian aid, monitoring forces, de-mining teams and training teams – and any other Australian Defence Force (ADF), New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF), or Australian Federal and State Police Operations. Membership also includes philanthropic organisations such as Everyman's Welfare Service, Red Cross and Salvation Army and defence civilians. APPVA has become recognised for the work it does for its many younger veteran members.

Australia's proud peacekeeping and peacemaking (enforcement) involvement began in Indonesia on 14 September 1947, with four Australian military officers being the first world peacekeepers with their deployment to the United Nations Good Offices Commission in Dutch East Indies (Indonesia). It has since involved over 75,000 veterans, who have participated in 73 operations in 64 different countries, including present-day activities in the Middle East, Africa and the Solomon Islands. Membership gives many younger veterans a voice, and allows them to be part of a young ESO, no matter where they served overseas or on peacetime service within Australia. Families of members are most welcome to become members also.

APPENDIX H

VOLUNTEERING VICTORIA

Volunteering Victoria is a member-based, not-for-profit, non-government organisation with a small core group of paid and voluntary staff who are led by a voluntary professional board. It receives some government and private funding for specific programs.

It has a diverse membership that is representative of a broad cross-section of volunteer organisations that include Commonwealth and state government departments, local governments and large state organisations, local sports clubs and community groups involving any number of volunteers.

Core activities and services include:

- offering skills education and training services for volunteer managers and supervisors
- making information available to volunteer managers/supervisors and individual volunteers through the network of volunteer resource centres and our information and referral service
- ensuring existing volunteers have access to information and services to enhance their volunteering experience
- enabling new volunteers to become involved via quality information and referral services.
- provision of written resources and information sheets on volunteer management
- innovative training programs
- advising on best practice policy development for volunteer-involving organisations
- undertaking government and private sector lobbying and advocacy to ensure decision makers are well informed
- providing a forum for raising issues relevant to volunteering
- providing consultancy support to organisations involving volunteers
- representing the Victorian volunteering sector in national and international forums.

APPENDIX I

VOLUNTEER RESOURCE CENTRES

Our volunteer resource centres connect volunteers and local organisations together. A volunteer resource centre or referral agency provides:

- resources and support for people to make informed choices about volunteer work and up-to-date information on volunteer services
- information on involving and managing volunteers.

THE CENTRES

- Albury Wodonga Volunteer Resource Bureau, Wodonga
- Bendigo Volunteer Resource Centre, Bendigo Central
- Ballarat Volunteer Resource Centre, Ballarat
- Boroondara Volunteer Resource Centre, Camberwell
- Eastern Volunteer Resource Centre, Ringwood East
- Geelong Volunteer Resource Centre, Geelong
- Glen Eira Volunteer Resource Centre, Caulfield
- Monash Volunteer Resource Centre, Glen Waverley
- Knox Community Volunteers, Bayswater
- Volunteering Victoria, Melbourne
- Volunteers of Banyule, Watsonia North
- Volunteers at Warrnambool, Warrnambool
- Volunteer West, Footscray
- The Centre for Continuing Education, Wangaratta
- Wimmera Volunteers, Horsham
- Whittlesea Community Connections, Epping

Reference www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au/vrc.aspx. accessed 24 April 2008.

STATE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

The Department of Human Services (DHS) is Victoria's largest government department. It directly employs more than 11,500 people and funds organisations such as hospitals, aged care facilities, ambulance services and community service agencies that collectively employ more than 80,000 people.

DHS plans, funds and delivers health, community and housing services and includes the portfolios of:

- **Health:** Health care services through the public hospital system, community health services and ambulance services; along with health promotion and protection services through emergency management, public health and related preventative services, education and regulation.
- **Mental Health:** A range of alcohol and drug prevention and treatment services are available. The public mental health service system consists of clinical services and psychiatric disability rehabilitation and support services.
- **Housing:** Secure, affordable and appropriate housing and support to low income Victorians is provided, along with accommodation and assistance support for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, and community building initiatives delivered through partnerships.
- **Aged Care:** Residential and rehabilitation care for older people, along with support and assistance to enable them to remain independently in their own homes.
- **Children:** Victoria's statutory responsibilities such as child protection and youth justice sit within DHS.
- **Disability:** Services that provide support for Victorians with intellectual, physical, sensory and dual disabilities, neurological impairments and acquired brain injury

APPENDIX I CONT. APPENDIX J

RURAL AND REGIONAL HEALTH AND AGED CARE SERVICES

Regions are DHS's public face and most departmental clients receive services from regional staff. Almost 80 per cent of the department's workforce is regionally based, and regions deliver services from more than 500 locations statewide.

Three metropolitan and five rural DHS regions develop and implement policy and funding for monitoring service delivery across the full range of health and aged care services for people in rural and regional Victoria. They also have statewide policy and program responsibility for:

- aged care
- primary and community health
- dental health

There are approximately 3000 veterans in DHS public housing.

COMMONWEALTH DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS – ACCOMMODATION SERVICES

Defence Service Homes loans

Defence Service Homes provides subsidised housing loans up to \$25,000 to recognise the contribution of DVA eligible people who have served in the Australian defence forces, either during war or peacetime. Loans are provided by the Westpac Banking Corporation under an agreement with the Australian Government. Loans are available to buy, build, enlarge, complete, modify or repair a house or unit, to refinance a mortgage over a house or unit, and are generally secured by a first mortgage. Loans are also available in certain circumstances for retirement village accommodation and granny flats.

A second service, the Home Support Loan, assists DVA eligible people with the cost of maintenance and modifications to their own homes, and other housing-related purposes that encourage independent living. The maximum loan is \$10,000 over a maximum term of 25 years. Conditions apply and for more information contact the Defence Service Homes centre on 1800 722 000.

Homeowners' building insurance and contents insurance

Defence Service Homes provides economically priced home and contents insurance policies to DVA entitled people. Conditions apply and for more information contact the Defence Service Homes insurance office on 1300 552 662.

HomeFront

HomeFront is a falls and accident prevention program aimed at assisting veterans and war widows/widowers to maintain independent living in their own homes. DVA Gold and White card holders are eligible for a free annual home assessment to identify fall hazards in and around the home.

Following this assessment DVA will make a financial contribution towards the cost of recommended aids and minor home modifications that will reduce the risk of falls and accidents in and around the home. The financial contribution is indexed annually and is currently \$196.00. Eligible members of the veteran community can call 1800 80 1945 for a free HomeFront assessment.

Veterans' Home Maintenance Line

The Veterans' Home Maintenance Line is a toll-free telephone service that provides advice on general property maintenance matters and referral to reliable and efficient local tradespeople with appropriate qualifications and both professional indemnity and public liability insurance cover. Any person who identifies as a member of the veteran community is eligible to access the free advice offered by the Veterans' Home Maintenance Line. The cost of any work undertaken and call out fee is at the expense of the client. The Veterans' Home Maintenance Line number is 1800 80 1945. Property maintenance and home inspection advice is available Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. Emergency property advice is available seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

Rent assistance

Rent assistance is a non-taxable amount payable to service pensioners and income support supplement (ISS) recipients residing in Australia to help cover the cost of non-government rental accommodation. The amount of rent assistance payable is calculated at the rate of 75 cents for every dollar of rent paid over the rent threshold up to a maximum amount. Any disability income received by the pensioner or their partner is counted as income under the disability income rent test which may reduce the rate of rent assistance payable.

Residential aged care

The Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) regulates aged care fees and charges. Aged care facilities may charge residents accommodation payments and daily care fees, which is a resident contribution towards their upkeep. The balance of costs are funded by DoHA. DVA contributes to this accommodation by reimbursing DoHA for their payment towards the upkeep of veterans. The exception to this arrangement relates to ex-prisoners of war, where DVA pays both the resident and government contributions.

Commonwealth State Territory Disability Agreement (CSTDA)

The current Australian Government's plan for Veterans' Affairs includes a commitment to incorporate the care and support needs of younger ex-service men and women with a disability in the new CSTDA. The rationale for the explicit inclusion of veterans for CSTDA services is that veterans, like other Australian citizens, should be able to access any relevant services provided by the Commonwealth, without discrimination or restriction.

APPENDIX K

CONCESSIONS FOR VETERANS IN AUSTRALIAN STATES AND TERRITORIES

VICTORIA

Trains, Trams and Buses – Metlink

Concessions are available for the following card holders:

- Pensioner Concession Card (Centrelink and DVA issued, all states)
- Victorian Public Transport Concession Card – Veterans (Vic only)
- WarWidow/ers Transport Concession Card (TCI) (Vic, NSW, WA only)

Free travel available for the following card holders:

- Veterans' Travel Pass (all states)

Limited Concessions:

- Seniors Card (Vic) are able to purchase a Seniors Daily (60 Plus) Metcard for all day use on trains, trams or buses across zones 1, 2 and 3.

Trains – V/Line

Concessions are available for the following card holders:

- Pensioner Concession Card (Centrelink and DVA issued, all states)
- Victorian Public Transport Concession Card – Veterans (Vic only)
- WarWidow/ers Transport Concession Card – TCI (Vic, NSW, WA only)

Free travel available for the following card holders:

- Veterans' Travel Pass (all states)

Restricted Concessions:

- Seniors Card (Vic) are also eligible for concession fares on nominated V/Line off-services.

NSW

Trains – City Rail

Concessions are available for the following card holders:

- Seniors Card (NSW only)
- Pensioner Concession Card (Centrelink and DVA issued, NSW, ACT, Vic only)
- WarWidow/er Concession Card – TCI (NSW, VIC only)

Free travel available for the following card holders:

- Blinded Soldier Gold Pass (NSW only)
- Buses and Ferries – Sydney Buses and Sydney Ferries

Concessions are available for the following card holders:

- Pensioner Concession Card (Centrelink and DVA issued, NSW, ACT, Vic only)
- Seniors Card (NSW only)
- WarWidow/er Concession Card – TCI (NSW, VIC only)

Limited Concessions:

- The Pensioner Concession Card from other states (excluding NSW, ACT and VIC) entitles the cardholder to a Pensioner Excursion Ticket.

Free travel available for the following card holders:

- Blind Soldiers Gold Pass (NSW only)
- Ex-Member of Defence Forces Pass (NSW only)
- World War I Veteran's, Wives & Widows Free Pass (NSW only)

Trains – Country Link

Concessions are available for the following card holders:

- Pensioner Concession Card (Centrelink and DVA issued, all states)
- Seniors Card (all states)

TASMANIA

Buses – Metro

Concessions are available for the following card holders:

- Health Care Cards (all states)
- Pensioner Concession Cards (DVA and Centrelink issued, all states)
- Persons aged 70 or over (all states)
- War Widows (classified by DVA, all states)

Limited Concessions:

- Seniors Card holders (any state on the condition that it is a Blue and Gold Card – over 60) are eligible to purchase Seniors all-day tickets allowing all-day travel for \$2.70 at any time.

Free travel available for the following card holders:

- Gold Card TPI holders (all states)

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Buses and Ferries – Darwinbus

Concessions are available for the following card holders:

- Health Care Card holders (all states)
- Pensioner Concession Cards (DVA and Centrelink issued, NT only)
- Gold Cards (all states)

Free travel available for the following card holders:

- TPI Gold Card holders (all states)
- EDA Gold Card holders (all states)

QUEENSLAND

Buses, Trains and Ferries – Translink

Concessions are available for the following card holders:

- Pensioner Concession Cards (DVA and Centrelink issued, all states)
- Seniors Card (Qld only)
- Gold Card (all states)

Free travel for the following card holders:

- War Veteran's Brisbane Transport Pass (Brisbane only)

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Buses, Trains and Trams – Adelaide Metro

Concessions are available for the following card holders:

- Pensioner Concession Cards (DVA and Centrelink issued, all states)
- Seniors Card (SA only)
- Gold Card holders (SA only)

Free travel for the following card holders:

- Incapacitated Ex-Service Personnel Card (SA only)
- TPI Gold Card (other states)

ACT

Buses – ACTION

Concessions are available for the following card holders:

- Pensioner Concession Card (Centrelink only, all states)
- DVA Gold Card (all states)

Limited Concessions:

- Seniors card holders (ACT)

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Ferries, Trains and Buses – Transperth

Concessions are available for the following card holders:

- War Veteran's Concession Pass (WA only)
- Seniors Card (WA only)
- Pensioner Concession Card (Centrelink issued, all states)
- Health Care Card (WA only)
- War Widow/ers Transport Concession Card – TCI (all states)

Free travel available for the following card holders:

- War Veteran Free Pass (WA only)

Ferries, Trains and Buses – Transwa (Regional WA travel)

Concessions are available for the following card holders:

- Pensioners Concession Card (Centrelink and DVA issued, WA only)
- Health Care Card (for Newstart only, WA only)
- Seniors Card (WA only)

APPENDIX L

VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT MULTI-PURPOSE TAXI PROGRAM (MPTP)

Eligibility

A permanent disability is a disability of an enduring nature, which is not expected to improve. Applicants for the MPTP must hold an eligible card listed below. Applicants who do not hold one of these cards listed below, but are experiencing financial hardship may also be assessed for the MPTP. People requiring the permanent use of a wheelchair are exempted from the need to hold an eligible card. Eligible cards include the following:

- Veterans' Affairs Cards – Pensioner Concession Card, Gold Repatriation Health Card, Gold Repatriation Health Card (TPI), Gold Repatriation Health Card (War Widow), Gold Repatriation Health Card (War Widower).
- Pensioner Concession Cards – Age Pension, Disability Support Pension, Single Parenting Payment, Carer Payment, Mature Age Allowance, Wife Pension, Widow B Pension.
- Health Care Cards (HCC) – Newstart Allowance HCC (NS), Youth Allowance HCC (YA), Sickness Allowance HCC (SA), Widow Allowance HCC (WA), Special Benefit HCC (SpB).

Applications can also be made for dependant children aged under 21, or qualifying dependant full-time students aged 21–24 years. Note:

A child or student is not dependant if:

- they are receiving a pension, Labour Market Program payment or benefit such as Youth Allowance or
- aged 5–15, not studying full-time and their annual income is more than \$8,613 or
- aged 16–24 and their annual income is more than \$8,613 or they are receiving a Prescribed Education Scheme payment such as ABSTUDY.

MPTP members will be charged \$16.50 for:

- the initial membership card
- renewal of the membership card
- replacement of the membership card if it is lost or stolen.

Membership cards are valid for six years.

Members can travel in any Victorian licenced taxi and pay 50 per cent of the metered fare, up to a maximum discount of \$30 per trip.

An annual subsidy cap of \$1030 per year applies to members, excluding members permanently requiring the use of a wheelchair and veterans with EDA or TPI endorsement.

A separate application form is available to MPTP members to request additional subsidy above the \$550 cap where exceptional circumstances apply. Program funds for exceptional circumstances are allocated based on priorities such as employment, education, training, day programs, health-related appointments or volunteering.

An application form to join the MPTP can be obtained from the Victorian Taxi Directorate.

APPENDIX M

STATE GOVERNMENT'S SCOP TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Stronger Community Organisations Project (SCOP) Terms of Reference encompassed:

1. An overview of the community sector in Victoria
2. The principal trends, influences and challenges that are currently impacting on organisations and those that may impact in the future
3. A strategic vision for the community sector for the next 10 years that identifies the role of the sector in contributing to Victoria's social, community and economic goals
4. Following completion of these strategic tasks SCOP will identify the issues and possible ways forward in relation to the following matters that go to the capacity of the sector and its relationship with government:
 - Workforce and leadership development – how organisations can attract and retain skilled and qualified staff both paid and volunteers
 - Organisational governance – what standards of governance are needed to meet public expectations of accountability
 - Organisational sustainability – what business and financial planning are needed to ensure sustainability and to attract resources from all sectors including philanthropy;
 - Quality and effectiveness – how can organisations achieve high standards, efficiencies and innovative approaches to service delivery
 - Assets and infrastructure – measures to maximise the use, and better planning of future and existing assets and infrastructure
 - Collaboration – what measures would assist organisations to collaborate within the sector and with government
 - Law and regulation – measures to reduce red tape and the burden of compliance on organisations and so allow greater focus on their mission of community service.

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