


THE DFWA MONTHLY UPDATE

	<p>PO Box 4166 KINGSTON ACT 2604 Telephone: 02 6265 9530 Facsimile: 02 6265 9776 W: www.dfw.org.au E: national@dfwa.org.au <i>Patron:</i> His Excellency Major General Michael Jeffery AC CVO MC (Retd) Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia</p>	<p>ISSUE 232 AUGUST 2008</p>
<p><i>Update</i> is a monthly newsheet (except for January) produced by the Defence Force Welfare Association (DFWA) containing items of interest to the Service and ex-Service community. It is distributed to politicians, media outlets, senior Service officers and DFWA branches. Branches are encouraged to distribute <i>Update</i> to Association members and other interested people or organisations. <i>Update</i> is also posted on the DFWA website.</p>		

AGENT ORANGE AND PROSTATE CANCER

Nearly 10% of the former South Vietnam was sprayed with the 'Agent Orange' between 1962 and 1971. A recent US study involving 13,000 US Vietnam veterans has showed that veterans exposed to Agent Orange have greatly increased risks of prostate cancer and even greater risks of getting the most aggressive form of the disease as compared to those who were not exposed. The findings, which will be published in the September 15 issue of the international journal *CANCER*, are the first to link the herbicide with this disease.

Vietnam veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange are encouraged to discuss these findings with their general practitioner and consider the need for prostate screening tests. DFWA is writing to DVA requesting a response to this new evidence.

AUSTRALIA'S FUTURE TAX SYSTEM INQUIRY

DFWA has advised the Treasury secretariat that it is keen to avoid the *Simpler Super* rancour that engulfed the ex-service community in 2006-07 because of what appeared to have been misconceptions within Treasury about aspects of military service conditions and retirement and disability pensions. DFWA is conscious that many of those problems were quite unintended and, had the team developing those proposals been able to consult, at least some of these problems might have been overcome.

As a result, DFWA will be looking to both the Review Team and the Government to provide a detailed and comprehensive assurance against unintended disadvantage to ADF superannuation recipients, in relation to any tax system changes that might flow from the Inquiry. If there has to be disadvantage, as there so often must be when changing tax systems, let it be intentional and explicitly justified, so that appropriate compensation measures can be addressed too. In particular DFWA has sought assurances that further deliberations within Treasury would encompass a written appraisal of the practical and real-time consequences of any proposed changes on ADF superannuation recipients, separate from but complementary to any other commentary on the impacts on the wider Australian community.

DFWA has advised Treasury that it stands ready to participate in any such Treasury staff actions, to act as a sounding board or as a source of general advice in the context of Ex-Service Organisation issues, if that would help the Secretariat to understand our constituency's issues.

FAREWELL TO THEIR EXCELLENCIES !

DFWA thanks His Excellency Major General Michael Jeffery AC CVO MC (Retd), Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, for his Patronage of the Association; and to Her Excellency Mrs Marlena Jeffery, Patron of the Defence Widows Support Group (DWSG) during their Excellencies' tenure at Government House.

SALARY SACRIFICING AND PENSION INDEXATION

The Australian Bureau of Statistics made a decision about a decade ago not to include salary sacrificing in the data they collect to compile wage indices, eg MTAW, AWOTE, etc. In those days salary sacrificing was not common and, in any case, the data was not reported, eg via the tax system as it is now. These days salary sacrificing is much more commonplace. The result is that none of the current wage indices reflect the true wages growth and, hence, can be relied upon to maintain relativity with the community's true standard of living. Accordingly, if Mr Matthews' review of public service and military pensions just recommends "the higher of CPI or MTAW", it still won't allow those pensioners to maintain relative living standards.

DFWA has informed Mr Matthews of this matter and has received acknowledgement of its receipt.

SUICIDE IN THE EX-SERVICE COMMUNITY

Written submissions are now being sought from ex-service members and members of the veteran community into a study that examines the broad issue of suicide in the ex-service community. The study aims to identify:

- ex-service members who are at increased risk of self harm;
- common contributing factors among ex-service members who have committed or attempted suicide;
- the extent of suicide in the ex-service community;
- lifestyle or other factors that may be contributing to suicide in the ex-service community; and
- recommended administrative reforms or initiatives to help combat suicide in the ex-service community.

Professor David Dunt, who is undertaking the study, is a public health specialist and epidemiologist with major interests in health program evaluation and health services research. It is expected that the study will be completed by the end of this year, with a report due to the Minister for Veterans' Affairs by early December 2008. All submissions will be confidential and will only be accessed by Professor Dunt. The DVA website (www.dva.gov.au) provides further information, including the Terms of Reference and address for submissions. Submissions close on 5 October 2008.

DFWA is considering if it has enough information to make a useful submission.

DFRDB SUPERANNUANTS DISADVANTAGED – AGAIN !

DFWA has written to the ADF Financial Services Council seeking advice on a 2007 change to the tax laws which appears to preclude military pensioners with pre-1983 undeducted purchase price (UPP) entitlements because the DFRDB Board's records for the period are inadequate.

F111 DESEAL – RESEAL PROGRAM

DFWA has made a submission to the Joint Defence Committee investigating the administration of ex-gratis payments relating to the F-111 Deseal-Reseal program. In it we pointed out the OH&S concerns relating to similar work on a wide variety of other aircraft. The Committee has invited DFWA to appear before it on 19 September.

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