



## DEFENCE FORCE WELFARE ASSOCIATION

*Patron-in-Chief: His Excellency Mr Michael Bryce AM AE*

### **The Australian Defence Force, the Australian Community and the Unique Nature of Military Service.**

**NATIONAL FORUM – 22 OCTOBER 2009**

#### **KEYNOTE ADDRESS : *The Unique Nature of Military Service***

**Brigadier Kerry Mellor (Retd)**  
**Defence Force Welfare Association**

#### **Synopsis**

In recent years there seems to have been a shift in assumptions and attitudes underpinning the way military service is viewed. Those in government who shape policy are increasingly attracted to the idea that the soldier (sailor or airman) is adequately provided for by salary and allowances that compensate for his service both while it is being given and after it has ceased. Military service can be seen as comparable to other forms of service that involve risk and danger, and therefore can no longer be seen as unique.

The unique nature of military service is rooted in the nature of society itself. Most democratic societies recognize the central place of the individual as the primary unit of sovereignty. Sovereign individuals are vested with inalienable human rights, recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as, among others, life, liberty and the security of the person (Article 3). Australia is a signatory of the Declaration, adopted by the General Assembly of the UN in 1948

Implicit in Article 3, there is also a right to defence of self and of others from attack, and this right inevitably gives rise to an obligation to do so if it is the State which is under threat or attack.

The inter-relationship of rights and responsibilities borne both by the state and the individual, is complex, and based on the principle of the social contract. The state may not alienate the rights of the individual without his assent. The individual, while preserving the integrity of his rights, may assent to the state's demand for surrender of some of them for the common good, but in all circumstances save one, the state is obliged to uphold and defend the individual's rights.

In volunteering for military service, the individual accepts the surrender of his basic rights under Article 3. He places his life, liberty and security of person in the hands of the state. This surrender is not unconditional, though *in extremis*, it is absolute. The state, for its part, accepts the obligation to preserve, as far as is consistent with the achievement of the military mission, the physical and spiritual wellbeing of the individual who places himself at its disposal. This obligation extends beyond the period of service itself, to the physical and psychological consequences of that service.

Even when the state demands surrender of these rights by imposing a compulsion for service, the terms of the social contract imply that such compulsion is done only within the democratic framework and is therefore with the assent of the individual, who at all times is party to it.

In no other calling, occupation or profession has the state the power to accept or demand the surrender of these rights. Military service in this fundamental respect is unique, and the obligation this places on the state is inescapable, as it is enduring.

## **PRESENTATION 1: *Moral Philosophy and Ethics***

**Dr Michael Evans**

**Australian Defence College**

### **Synopsis**

Professional Western militaries such as the Australian Defence Force spend much time on training and educating officers for the external rigours of operational service and combat. In contrast, comparatively little time is spent on imparting moral philosophy to arm the inner character of the modern officer. The collapse of common middle class values, the rise of post-modernism in education and the notion of the West as a secular and even ‘post-Christian’ society’ means that the ADF faces an age dominated by relativism and identity-politics with many values that are difficult to reconcile with the military ethos.

This paper outlines the value of Stoic moral philosophy drawn from the classical world as one basis for teaching military officers the value of moral philosophy. Such an approach reinforces modern ethics and the use of comparative religion as a basis for imparting codes of good conduct. A Stoic philosophy may, in current social circumstances, be a useful way of ameliorating the increasing relativism of modern Australian civil society.

## **PRESENTATION 2: *The Myth of the Digger***

**Mr Neil James**

**Executive Director**

**Australian Defence Association**

### **Synopsis**

It is nearly 65 years after Australia’s last war involving mass participation, either in uniform or in living through wartime as a civilian. The passage of time has meant a decline in mass understanding of military matters in particular and the effects of war on humans in general.

There has inevitably been an ever-diminishing proportion of the population with personal experience of military service, or family sacrifice. In most Australian families the knowledge of military service by family members is now indirect at best (because Great Grandad is dead) and is more often handed-down folk memories not real understanding.

While popular culture is well-infused with our military heritage in a very general sense, this is now inversely proportional to public understanding of military matters. ANZAC Day is a widely-observed and generally respected community ritual, and Remembrance Day is at least observed nationally by officialdom (and war veterans), but most Australians do not think much if at all about our defence force for the other 263 days of the year.

Moreover, when most Australians consider defence issues, both individually and collectively, they are unduly influenced by historically-based perspectives stemming from the ANZAC Day effect.

This has several detrimental effects to the consideration of defence and indeed veterans’ issues in modern-day Australian politics. One of the biggest and most longstanding obstacles to informed public debate in Australia on defence and strategic issues, at both the community and political levels, is the “myth of the digger”.

This mythology, an offshoot from collective memorialisation of the exploits of the original Anzacs, has resulted in the widespread belief that all Australians are somehow natural soldiers instinctively, and indeed inherently and automatically better ones than all, or at worst most, foreigners.

In terms of our current and indeed past national defence efforts, a tragic and recurrent result of this myth is a pervasive but delusional and dangerous complacency that Australia does not need to spend much on defence preparedness or expend effort on prudent forward planning. Instead the myth maintains we can ignore proper consideration of defence issues because a deep national reservoir of natural warriors is instantly and constantly available to rally around the flag when war or crisis threatens.

All any Australian supposedly needs is a khaki (now camouflage) shirt and a rifle and all will then be well. Such myths, and the associated public ignorance and complacency, have long enabled Australian governments of both political persuasions to ignore their defence responsibilities when they think it is safe to do so politically — and to buy votes elsewhere by regularly diverting defence funding to the transient pet issue of the day. The “myth of the digger” has particularly affected how our Army has been treated. It largely underwrote much of the “militia myth” that split the army into professionally warring reservist and regular fiefdoms for nearly a century and required us, for example, to fight World War II with three separate armies legally and organisationally.

The “myth of the digger” also underlies much of why we began both world wars with more defeats and disasters than victories and why, much more recently, we only just coped with the 1999 East Timor crisis. And indeed why, even now, some newspapers regularly publish flawed and/or ahistoric opinion articles by academics and former bureaucrats declaring that Australia will always be able to pick and choose who, where, how and when we fight and for how long – or claiming dishonestly that our army does not need any tanks or our navy any destroyers or adequately-sized amphibious ships.

In terms of how we as a nation look after our war veterans, or set and maintain the conditions of service of our current defence force, the myth of the digger and the ANZAC Day effect also have pernicious and inequitable effects.

By both accident and ideological design, it is now common to encounter the belief that the defence force is little or no different to any other occupation and that the battlefield is just another type of workplace.

This leads neatly on to the bureaucratically or politically convenient belief that the effects of military service and/or battle on people are not really different to that experienced by any other occupation or profession. In turn this manifests itself in proposals that compensation to veterans for wounds or war-caused illnesses and injuries are somehow just another aspect or form of civilian social welfare payments. Or in failures that the terminology that makes distinguishes between Service personnel being wounded and civilians being injured is just a quaint or irrelevant historicism rather than an issue that cuts to the quick of an important difference between military service and purported civilian comparisons. Or the belief that the personnel of our defence force somehow do not deserve conditions of service that are different from civilian standards or norms.

### **PRESENTATION 3: *Strategic Corporals***

**Dr Bob Breen**

**Research Fellow,**

**Official History of Australian Peacekeeping, Humanitarian and post-Cold War Operations**

**Australian National University**

#### **Synopsis**

The demands of modern military service and media commentary on overseas operations have increased. The consequences of the good and bad decisions of junior military leaders and small teams have escalated. Military operations have become more politically, morally and culturally complex. The unethical behavior of junior leaders and small teams can cause strategic embarrassment.

The time has come to complement Australia’s investment in ships and aircraft with ‘human factor’ investments in careful recruitment, increased remuneration and high-quality training for high-calibre

individuals, who may wear the junior rank of corporal or leading seaman, but carry strategic responsibilities on operations.

The deployment of a 1,000-strong battalion group to Somalia in 1993 was Australia's largest post-Cold War expeditionary operation. It was an early example of 'three block' operations in the Information Age. Australian corporals held Australia's reputation in their hands. Australia's national interests were at stake when an Australian advance guard of 2,500 troops arrived in Dili, East Timor ten years ago in late September 1999. Australian corporals held the future of Indonesian and Australian relations in their hands.

The first media images of both operations to be broadcast were critically important. Australia's junior leaders and small teams did a great job. Their personal and professional conduct in Somalia and East Timor are Exhibits A and B for change in the acknowledgement and reward the Australian people afford to strategic corporals.

In Afghanistan Australian junior leaders and small teams are part of a comprehensive counterinsurgency campaign. The main issue is not so much to destroy the enemy, but rather to protect the Afghan people so they can build a civil society that will reject the Taliban. The time has come to elevate public profile of Australia's 'strategic corporals' and to explain the increasing demands placed on them and their small teams, as well as the importance of their performance on Australia's regional and international military operations.

#### **PRESENTATION 4: *A Social Inclusion for the Veteran Community***

**Major Norm Bell (Retd) BA Hons.**

**Project Officer Royal Australian Regiment Association (SA)**

**Research Officer - CC of ESO (SA)**

##### **Synopsis**

"The Australian soldier has frequently been admired for his personal independence and individual initiative. The Australian voter has been continually blamed for his lack of initiative and for his excessive dependence upon the state. Unless we are to assume that the fighters have not voted and the voters have not fought, we must seek some explanation of these contradictory reputations.' Keith Hancock, 1930.

In keeping with the theme for this forum, this paper will first take an historical perspective of sufficient compass to reveal the salient points in social change that have shaped the modern **Australian Community** from which the **Australian Defence Force** is drawn. Some care will be taken to tease out the significance of these changes for the relationship between the ADF and civil society and how it might be improved. The remainder of the paper is based on a recent submission to the South Australian Government calling for a Social Inclusion Action Plan for the Veteran Community.

#### **PRESENTATION 5: *Unique Nature of Ex Service Organisations***

**Mr Kel Ryan psc**

**MBus (Phil and Nonprofit Studies)**

**Defence Force Welfare Association**

##### **Synopsis**

There are seemingly too many ex-service organisations [ESO's] in Australia! Also the value of the ESO's to the broad veteran and ex-service community is often misunderstood. Consequently it is problematic to gauge the level of influence their often disparate voices have on the attitude of the political establishment, the bureaucracy and the ADF.

Traditionally the RSL has been the largest and indeed for a long time the sole influence on policy relating to the Australian veteran community. After World War One the then 'The Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League of Australia (RSSILA) played a pivotal role in laying the foundations of the veteran's entitlements that are manifest today. The societal impact of that War and the horrendous casualty figures suffered by Australia enabled the RSSILA to hold great political influence of behalf of all veterans.

This delineation between those who were 'veterans' and those who did not go overseas or 'ex-service' has been the cause of much animosity, envy and endless division in what should be a united, focused Defence Family. This division persists to this day.

The strength of the ESO fluctuates constantly and is a cause of concern when seeking to provide representation. In the early 1980's the RSL viewed its declining membership of veterans with alarm. The WW1 veterans were rapidly passing while the WW2 veterans were in their 60's and 70's. This posed a worry for the future viability of the League to the extent that after lengthy debate it was agreed to open membership of the RSL to all those who had served six months or more in the ADF, both regular forces and reserves. The expected rise in membership however failed to eventuate as the League continued to focus its energies on the concerns of the veterans of both WW1 and WW2.

This lapse on the part of the RSL was to see the growth of several Vietnam veteran organisations and the rebirth of the TPI Federation.

The melting pot of ESO's, their often distrustful relationship and the myriad of issues they seek to address on behalf of a common constituency has only resulted in declining memberships, a lessening of influence on government and the failure to gain the interest of younger veterans and ex-service personnel.

These same ESO's assume a serious responsibility on behalf of DVA, the ADF and the Government by being the front line for veterans and ex-service personnel on pensions, advocacy and welfare issues and concerns. It is the ESO that plays a major role in identifying the issues central to ADF members after they leave the service it is not DVA nor is it the ADF. This service is provided free by the various ESO's.

This role is not recognised by the ADF! Seemingly the ADF is reluctant to acknowledge that the ESO can assist, particularly in the area of compensation claims and support issues. This disconnect from the ADF has been caused, in part, by the ESO's themselves. The political nature of much of what they do does not sit well with the restrained nature of service discipline.

If the ESO community is to regain a preeminent role in the Australian society it is time for the:

- a. The RSL to adopt a stronger leadership role within the veteran and ex-service community, and
- b. The broad ESO community to seek a degree of cohesion not experienced in recent years.

Future relations with the ADF demand it and the younger veterans and ex-service personnel will want to see value for money before they take an interest and join an Ex-Service Organisation.

## **PRESENTATION 6: *Professional Naval Service***

**VADM Russ Crane AM CSM**

**Chief of Navy**

..... presented by **DEPUTY CHIEF OF NAVY: Rear Admiral D.R. Thomas AO, CSC, RAN**

### **Synopsis**

A majority of writing concerning Australian military history focuses on the endeavours of the Australian Army, with much of this focussed on famous encounters such as the iconic battles of Gallipoli or the Somme. "Undeniably, this focus has influenced the perception and awareness of the nation. A tradition based on ANZAC and the 'digger,' are routinely described..."

The perspective is not well rounded, for it often overlooks the ongoing and crucial contribution of the Royal Australian Navy to the defence and security of the nation.

Though “inconspicuous and unique,” service in the Royal Australian Navy is no less professional than service in the Army or Air Force. This proposition might be explored by reflection upon the nature of professionalism, which highlights notions of intellectual and technical mastery, but also demands a high degree of moral attentiveness.

More than technical expertise – and the Royal Australian Navy *is* very accomplished – the professional ethos and culture of the Service is defined by great ethical depth. This is illustrated by the chivalry which marked the battle between HMAS *Sydney* and SMS *Emden*. The humanity which distinguishes Navy’s engagement with those in distress at sea affords a further illustration of the ethos which defines service in the Navy.

The nature of service at sea is reflected by the interdependence and team spirit which flourishes amongst ships’ companies. There is an unparalleled degree of cohesion which is perceptible in the narrative of naval gallantry.

Naval service is also engaged with the broader maritime environment. The Navy has collaborated in significant environmental projects with the CSIRO. Additionally, the service maintains a thorough program of oceanographic research and hydrographic survey.

## **PRESENTATION 7: *A Wife’s Perspective***

**Mrs Bronwen Usher**

**DFWA - WA**

### **Synopsis**

The techno-revolution of recent years has brought about significant changes in community thinking and values. The continual focus on the present, and only the present, has had the effect of inducing a generational memory loss. This has resulted in the dismissal of history and the lessons to be learned from it. The government and many of its advisors are part of this new age mentality.

Modern service personnel have seen massive increases in their pay, allowances and conditions. Modern society looks on and sees only affluence. It does not think about the service rendered for this pay. It understands levels of pay and assumes that adequate compensation for service is all that is needed.

Since WW2 families have supported the serviceman because the Government did not provide at all, or provided a minimum of assistance. Service family life was difficult, but considered part of the job. Service families were not considered to be the valuable resource that they are. Multiple moves, sacrificed employment opportunities, disrupted education for children, social and family separation was the lot of the service family. Servicemen returning from difficult deployments had little in the way of help save the loving, but often unqualified, spouse for support.

In the past decade the spin machine has been to work on conditions of service, particularly those concerning families and has society believing that service life is now up to date and the old problems are solved. Scratch the surface and you will find that this is not so. Families live in less financially straightened circumstances, but the underlying factors that make service life so singular have not changed. Families bring their own meaning to that phrase “The Unique Nature of Military Service.”

## **KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

### ***The Unique Nature of Military Service.***

Brig Kerry Mellor (Retd)

**DFWA Forum 22 October 2009**

#### **Introduction**

This discussion paper is intended to help the Association clarify and strengthen its understanding of the elements of military service which render it unique as an activity (or vocation) within a democratic society such as Australia. It should be seen as a beginning, and not a definitive and complete examination of the question.

#### **Background**

In recent years there has been a tendency among those responsible for administration of public finances to question some long – held assumptions about the way those who render military service should be compensated. This questioning not only relates to the just reward due for the serviceman’s labours, but also to the restitution owed to him and his dependents if he becomes disabled due to disease, injury or death suffered in the course of his service. There is being heard more frequently a notion that the serviceman’s salary and conditions contain an element of “danger money” which represents substantial compensation ”in advance” for any disability incurred while serving and that this reduces the obligation to provide compensation after the event. It should be the Association’s position, in my view, that the questions of pay and conditions and compensation for disability should be kept strictly separate, as matters of policy. Pay and conditions are directed not only towards just recompense for services rendered, but also to attraction to service of high quality volunteers. They may vary from time to time to suit changing circumstances. Compensation for disability is a matter of justice alone, and reflects recognition of the essential nature of military service.

Allied to the notion of “compensation in advance” is a growing perception that military service can fairly compared to a number of other callings in our society that involve those engaged in

them an element of exposure to danger. Police and Emergency services are most often cited in this context.

In examining military service as a unique calling we should understand that exposure to danger and the courage to face it are of themselves not unique features of military service. In arguing our case, we do not maintain that the serviceman has a higher requirement to show courage, nor a greater willingness to make sacrifices – even of his life – than others who serve the society and protect it from danger. We claim only for the serviceman a distinction from all other callings, in that he, and he alone, is under a compulsion to face danger and make sacrifices – even of his life – once either he has committed himself to serve, or has been compelled to serve by the State.

### **Rights and Obligations.**

The spirit of the times places great emphasis on the concept of Human Rights and their close ally, Civil Rights. The concept is usually taken to apply to the rights of an individual citizen in relation to other citizens or to the State.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 10<sup>th</sup> December 1948, in Article 3, declares baldly that “Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person.” The first paragraph of the Preamble describes the rights that should be recognized as being “equal and inalienable.” Australia has acceded to the declaration.

These Human Rights are equivalent to those “inalienable” and God-given rights set out in the American Declaration of Independence – Life Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness. Australia, and indeed all modern liberal democracies pay at least lip service to these rights, and none would argue with their spirit. Our discussion will take these three undisputed rights as its starting point. It will be based firmly on the proposition that these are rights possessed by each and every citizen as an individual.

The origin of these rights lies in the recognition of the individual citizen as the unit of autonomy in a liberal democratic society. Social structures are composed of individuals freely associating, or freely assenting to imposed association, for the common good. The most basic and most strongly coherent of social structures is the family; others are both more complex and less coherent as they progress through communities, municipalities, states or provinces, up to the nation state itself. In the community of nations, each state possesses a sovereign right to manage its own affairs in relation to other states. This sovereignty is exercised on behalf of, and in the name of, “the people”. Within the state sovereignty rests with the individual, who possesses his basic rights, and his vote, as an individual. He is governed, and takes his place in the social structure by his own consent. This is true even in cases where he disagrees with the actions of state to which he belongs, or with the outcome of a particular election in which he cast his vote. Recognition of the right of the majority of individual citizens to determine the colour of the government of the state is an inescapable consequence of acceptance of the democratic state itself.

It is obvious that the position of the individual in a democratic system is not sustainable unless there is general assent to the system by the population as a whole. There must be in all matters essential to the peace and good order of the state, a body of shared values. It is these shared values that underpin acceptance of rights and obligations by both individuals and the State.

Though not usually identified as a “human right” in social discourse, the right of an individual to defend himself from attack – physical or moral – is almost universally acknowledged and is enshrined in law in all democratic societies. Though primarily related to the individual himself, this right extends to his right to assist in the defence of others; family, community, fellow citizens and the state itself.

The right to assist in the defence of family, community and nation does not of itself create an obligation to do so, though shared values may well act to induce in an individual a sense of obligation. His act in offering himself to assist in the defence of others is, nonetheless, a free act of the will. For its part the state may impose on the individual an obligation to assist in the defence of the nation as a whole, but it is able to do so only with the assent of the governed, through the mechanism of shared values. In this way even compulsory military service, in

which the basic human rights of those called to service appear to be appropriated, are, in fact voluntarily surrendered.

Practically all modern states maintain standing forces to discharge the responsibility entrusted to them by their citizens, of protecting their people from threats of coercion by use of military force. Usually these standing forces' role is to support the policy objectives of the state, principally in the area of foreign relations. To maintain force levels they usually rely on citizens' voluntary service. But the highest purpose of military forces is to maintain the capability of meeting an enemy on the battlefield and winning.

The State has been entrusted by its citizens with the obligation to protect them. If it is to discharge this obligation, it therefore has a right to expect, even to demand, that the people will provide the means do so, in the form both of treasure and manpower. The right to self-defence thus inevitably imposes a general obligation to render military service.

### **The Individual and the State**

The relationship between the individual and the State in a democratic society is a very complex one. It rests on the somewhat imprecise concept of shared values, and manifests itself in a not very clearly defined network of mutual rights and obligations, and the expectations they create. The mechanism by which the relationship is moderated has been termed the "social contract". Under the social contract the individual citizen accepts that he or she must contribute to maintaining the means of defence. He expects that the state will organize, administer and regulate the defence forces, and that it will set limits by way of laws and regulations on the manner in which the forces may be employed.

Those who offer themselves for military service accept that they place themselves under the authority of the State to the degree necessary to achieve the State's military objectives. Though the authority of the state may be bound and moderated by policies, customs and usages, even by laws, all understand and accept that at bottom the relationship is one of obedience. For all practical purposes the authority of the state over the individual as exercised by military

superiors on its behalf, is limitless. The obedience required by the exigencies of military service is total.

The State for its part accepts as an obligation that the individuals under its authority who render service are sustained in bodily health and are entitled to be treated at all times with fairness and justice. This is not to say that in extreme circumstance extreme demands will not be made; but in all circumstances the social contract requires that the highest possible value will be placed by the State on the safety, welfare and life of each individual. It also requires that in recognition of the service rendered, the State will assume, as an obligation, responsibility for the dependents of those who have lost their lives in its service, and responsibility for the care of, and compensation for, those who have suffered disability as a result of their service.

### **Unique Service**

It is precisely here that the unique nature of military service lies. In ordinary times military service is freely rendered by volunteers. In extreme circumstances the social contract may be invoked by the State by compulsion. In either case, however, once the individual has entered military service, the relationship of obedience is established. This relationship **necessarily** requires the surrender of the individual's "inalienable" right to liberty, and alienates his right to life and security of the person, by placing responsibility for their preservation in the hands of others. Not every person who renders military service encounters the enemy on the battlefield, but every person who enters military service must accept that he is expected to do so, if ordered, and is trained to do so.

A consequence of military service is that individual autonomy, the fundamental repository of sovereignty in a democracy, is surrendered to the common good. Freedom of choice as to the individual's own destiny, which lies at the heart of all civil liberties, is negated. In their place is the truth that he may be, by the decision of others against which there is no appeal, placed in extreme peril of his life, and lose that life, if that were the outcome of the decision.

In no other activity or vocation within a democratic state does the relationship of obedience to the authority of the State in the face of danger to life or bodily damage exist. Emergency services have an obligation **not** to accept extreme risks to their safety, lest they become consumers of the very service they are attempting to provide. Members of the Police Service are entitled to defend themselves from violent offenders, but are under no compulsion to endanger their lives or safety by the orders of a superior. The fact that many of them do, and display courage to the point of heroism in doing so, should not obscure the fact that they may not be compelled, nor be punished for failure, to incur serious danger.

Very different is the lot of the sailor, soldier or airman. No matter what the danger, his clear duty is to the military mission, and to play his part in its achievement, he must obey. The most abject coward, most terror-stricken faintheart, has no alternative but to expose himself to life-threatening danger, if so ordered. He may no longer invoke Civil or Human Rights to review his position as an autonomous unit of Society. Should he attempt to do so, and arrive at a decision that opposes that of his superiors, he commits an offence punishable by law. His offence is Dereliction of Duty, at the least. When the soldier is engaged on the battlefield there is nowhere to go, morally or physically. The danger must be faced, and the consequences accepted, whatever they may be.

His calling is unique.

DFWA FORUM  
Canberra  
22 October 09

**‘The ADF, the Australian Community and the Unique Nature of  
Military Service’**

**A SOCIAL INCLUSION ACTION PLAN  
FOR THE VETERAN COMMUNITY**

**By**

**Major Norm Bell [Rtd.] BA [Hons.]**

## A SOCIAL INCLUSION ACTION PLAN FOR THE VETERAN COMMUNITY

*'The Australian soldier has frequently been admired for his personal independence and individual initiative. The Australian voter has been continually blamed for his lack of initiative and for his excessive dependence upon the state. Unless we are to assume that the fighters have not voted and the voters have not fought, we must seek some explanation of these contradictory reputations.'* Keith Hancock, 1930 \*1.

### Introduction

In keeping with the theme for this forum, this paper will first take an historical perspective of sufficient compass to reveal the salient points in social change that have shaped the modern **Australian Community** from which the **Australian Defence Force** is drawn. Some care will be taken to tease out the significance of these changes for the relationship between the ADF and civil society and how it might be improved. The remainder of the paper is based on a recent submission to the South Australian Government calling for a Social Inclusion Action Plan for the Veteran Community.

### The Australian Community and Social Change

The six British colonies of Australia formed a federation called the Commonwealth of Australia on January 1, 1901. This nation was founded not in war, revolution or nationalist assertion, but by practical men striving for income, justice, employment and security. Australia was settled by wave after wave of working men and women who detested class privilege in Britain and saw in a new life, in a new world, the possibility of a classless society with opportunities and rewards based on merit. Although Australia has no Bill of Rights or Declaration of Independence, our cultural heritage was founded on an ethos of *egalitarianism: a fair go: equality of opportunity*.

In Australia, there is a history of literature seeking to deal with the question of a distinctive Australian national character and identity. The context is usually the modern nation-state, the concern being to articulate the ties that bind a nation's citizenry. One of the central dilemmas arising from any project with this agenda is that posed by the seeming contradiction of individual-societal dualism. There are two opposed positions that inform the relationship between individuals and society. On the one hand there is individualism, within which the source of all action and agency is the unitary person. On the other hand there is collectivism, within which the social structures and cultural resources that we have accumulated largely determine the actions of individuals.

Hancock explains this ambivalence: *'The simple and admirable ideals of the [settler] Australians, once instituted and enacted through the not so simple instrument of the state, had real consequences often at odds with the original search for justice.'*\*2

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### Notes:

1. Hancock, cited in Capling, et. al. *Australian Politics in the Global Era*, p.113. From Keith Hancock's famous book *Australia*, published in 1930.
2. Hancock, *ibid.* p.114.

In 1930, Hancock sought to capture the Australian political tradition: '*Australian democracy has come to look upon the State as a vast public utility whose duty it is to provide the greatest happiness for the greatest number ... to the Australian, the State means collective power at the service of individualistic "rights". Therefore he sees no opposition between his individualism and his reliance upon Government.*'\*3. Hancock's general conclusion was that the very virtues of the Australian political culture had become vices.

The framers of our constitution struggled for over ten long years to produce a document which, to be accepted in a states' rights environment, had to be couched in vague terms and open to interpretation. They were forced to accept that the working details would have to be and could be developed in political debate and practice as the federation grew and changed. They made provision for change but failed to foresee the impact of political parties and partisan politics.\*4. The Australian party system coalesced around the struggle between capital and labour to produce structures, which institutionalised conflict and centred on the need to control those institutions.

The First World War had a devastating effect on Australia. In 1914 the male population of Australia was less than 3 million, yet almost 400 000 of them volunteered to fight in the war. An estimated 60 000 died and tens of thousands were wounded. The period between the two world wars was marked by instability. Social and economic divisions widened during the Depression years when many Australian financial institutions failed.

During the Second World War, Australian forces made a significant contribution to the Allied victory in Europe, Asia and the Pacific. The generation that fought in the war and survived came out of it with a sense of pride in Australia's capabilities. It is interesting to note that no less than ninety-one ex-servicemen sat in the 22<sup>nd</sup> Parliament [1955].

After 1945 Australia entered a boom period. Hundreds of thousands of refugees and migrants arrived in Australia in the immediate post-war period, many of them young people eager to embrace their new lives with energy and vigour. The number of Australians employed in the manufacturing industry had grown steadily since the beginning of the century. Many women who had taken over factory work while men were away at war were able to continue working in peacetime.

The economy developed strongly in the 1950s with major nation-building projects such as the Snowy Mountains Scheme, a hydro-electric power scheme located in Australia's south-east mountain region. Suburban Australia also prospered. The rate of home ownership rose dramatically from barely 40 per cent in 1947 to more than 70 per cent by the 1960s. Other developments included the expansion of government social security programs and the arrival of television.

The 1960s was a period of change for Australia. The ethnic diversity produced by post-war immigration, the United Kingdom's increasing focus on Europe, and the Vietnam War, all contributed to an atmosphere of political, economic and social change. The long post-war domination of national politics by the coalition of the Liberal and Country [now National] parties ended in 1972, when the Australian Labor Party was elected. By the mid 1970s, the extent of Australia's economic problems, especially our parlous trading position, became apparent.

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**Notes:**

3. Hancock, cited in Kelly, *The End of Certainty*, Allen & Unwin, 1992 p.10.

4. In Australia, **national referendums** are polls held to approve government-proposed changes to the Australian constitution. Referenda have been difficult to carry; 44 referendums have been held in Australia as of 2008, of which only 8 have been carried. The difficulties of changing the Constitution have resulted in the almost moribund Federal System we have today. The most difficult and most necessary area to reform is Commonwealth-State financial relations.

In the early 1980s, Australia embarked on a path of integrating its economy more closely with that of the rest of the developed world. A process of restructuring commenced, starting with the float of the currency in 1983, deregulation of the financial system, and later, steep tariff cuts and further reforms, including greater competition for the public sector as well as the private sector.

In 1983, global financial markets, not governments, became the key determinant of exchange rates and interest rates. Australia is reliant on foreign capital for balance of trade payments and development. Governments that tried to use public spending to alleviate a recession or unemployment soon found themselves 'disciplined' by these markets and the international credit agencies that they empowered. This might take the form of capital 'flight' out of the offending country, or markets might sell off the national currency, triggering a damaging fall in exchange rates. This reality poses a grave challenge to our traditional notions of political accountability, self-determination, and national sovereignty.

Other key government initiatives for steering the Australian economy into the global era have come to be known as *microeconomic reform*. The central objective of microeconomic policy is to raise the economy's long term growth rate, particularly by increasing the rate of productivity growth and increasing the economy's flexibility, i.e., its ability to adjust to changes in the economic environment without generating as much inflation and unemployment. These rapid changes were not achieved without pain and dislocation. Paul Keating, spoke on the malaise:

*'Essentially, the old certainties are passing. There is a feeling that community and nation-building are not co-operative efforts; that goals are not shared; that there is no guiding light; that modern life is leading to a greater sense of isolation; that, for all their promise, our technologies are often asocial; that modern economies spin wealth to the peripheries and away from the middle; that employment is insecure; that structural change leaves uncompensated losers in its wake; that the absence of widely shared and binding social and national values leaves people feeling disconnected and searching for some greater meaning in their lives.'*<sup>5</sup>

Paul Kelly has written the ultimate inside story of how the 1980s changed Australia and its political parties forever. He reminds us of the sheer pace of economic and social change the country lived through and the wake of uncertainty it left behind.<sup>6</sup> Years of economic restructuring, including reduced job security and longer working hours, have had a deep social impact. They also suggest that the breakdown of the nationally-regulated economy and the increasing **globalisation** of all aspects of life have produced underlying social shifts.

Most commentators agree that the term 'globalisation' refers to the emergence of a global economy which is characterised by uncontrollable market forces and new economic actors such as transnational corporations, international banks and other financial institutions [with time and space flows largely facilitated by the knowledge industry and the revolution in IT]. Unlike national economies which could once be regulated and shaped by national governments, the global economy is largely unregulated by political institutions.

National Governments are elected to govern and to regulate and protect people from the worst excesses of the market economy. However, as Polanyi pointed out: '*a market economy demands nothing less than market society*' ... '*the control of the economic system by the market means no less than the running of society as an adjunct to the market. Instead of economy being embedded in social relations, social relations are embedded in the economic system*'.<sup>7</sup>

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#### Notes:

5. Paul Keating, Address at Uni of NSW, November 1996.

6. Paul Kelly, *The End of Certainty*, Allen & Unwin, 1992. See also: Paul Kelly, *The March of Patriots*, Melbourne University Publishing, 2009. Kelly looks at the creation of a new Australian Settlement during the 1991-2003 era of Paul Keating and John Howard.

7. Polanyi, Karl. 1944,1957. *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*. Boston: Beacon Press, p57.

Profound social changes associated with globalization, economic rationalism and pluralism have sparked concern with social cohesiveness, integration and national identity in contemporary Australia. That's a fairly simplified, broad-brush description of a process that is as old as capitalism itself.

Capitalism is driven by capital's need to expand. That drive exists because of the relationships between competing capitals and between capital and labour. To survive against those two pressures, each firm must reduce the unit cost of production, which leads to producing ever more. Because the additional product must be sold if a profit is to be realised, mass marketing is the companion of mass production. The essence of capitalism is not internal to capital but operates through its links to human and natural resources, mediated through markets.

Once we realise how markets work and where the capitalist system is headed, we will have better ideas about what we can do to redress its social inequalities and environmental rapaciousness. Without an understanding of capitalism's dynamic, reform projects will not work; personal plans and responses will be inappropriate.

Form Follows Function. Over a century ago, sociologist Max Weber warned of the stifling hand of bureaucratic and managerial domination and of the terrible human cost its advance would exact. According to Weber, modernity is characterized by the increasing role of calculation and control in social life, a trend leading to what he called **the iron cage of bureaucracy**.<sup>8</sup> Human beings enslaved by a rational order have become mere cogs in the social machinery, objects of technical control in much the same way as raw materials and the natural environment.

Once the absolute reign of flexibility is established, with employees being hired on fixed-term contracts or on a temporary basis, competition is extended to individuals themselves, through the individualisation of the wage relationship: establishment of individual performance objectives, individual performance evaluations, permanent evaluation, individual salary increases or granting of bonuses as a function of competence and of individual merit. Simple wage labourers in relations of strong hierarchical dependence, are at the same time held responsible for their sales, their products, their branch, their store, etc. as though they were independent contractors.

These are techniques of rational domination that impose over-involvement in work [not only among management] and work under emergency or high-stress conditions. They converge to weaken or abolish collective standards or solidarities. In this way, a Darwinian world emerges - it is the struggle of all against all at all levels of the hierarchy, which finds support through isolated individual clinging to job and organization under conditions of insecurity, suffering, and stress. In hierarchical organisations and bureaucracies it produces mediocrity, mendacity and the sort of 'Group-Think' described by Janis and Mann.

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**Notes:**

8. Weber, Max. 1958. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Translated by Talcott Parsons [NY: Charles Scribner's Sons], p.181. See also:

**Fordism:** a regime of accumulation involving mass production and consumption. [Henry Ford (1863-1947), known for a differentiated division of labour, assembly-line production and mass-produced consumer goods, characterized by large-scale semi-skilled workforces, standardized production, and work control via **Taylorism** or Scientific Management. For a critique of Taylorism, see:

Braverman, H. *Labour and monopoly capital: The degradation of work in the twentieth century*, 1974; Monthly Review Press, NY.

**McDonaldization** is the term invented by *George Ritzer* to describe a sociological phenomenon that is happening in our society. The process of McDonaldization takes a task and breaks it down into smaller tasks. This is repeated until all tasks have been broken down to the smallest possible level. The resulting tasks are then rationalized to find the single most efficient method for completing each task. All other methods are then deemed inefficient and discarded.

Furthermore, economic rationalism is not necessarily rational. Free markets may not produce a socially desirable distribution of income; they cannot cope with *externalities*; they may fail to supply *public goods*; and, because of the tendency to concentration of capital, monopolies and economic imperialism, they may not come particularly close to the ideals of perfect competition and economic efficiency anyway. There is still an important role for political institutions and governance.

This paper is not anti-capitalist or free-market. We all prefer markets to be as free as possible but in Australia today, we do not have level playing fields with monopolies, oligopolies, and trans-national corporations getting all the free kicks. We also have a rulebook, a Constitution, that was written in the 19th Century and few want to change it. As a result, our parliaments at federal level are moribund and in decline, making our Federal arrangements work is problematical and many of our institutions are outdated if not archaic.

There has been a noticeable loss and erosion of all the collective institutions capable of counteracting the effects of the infernal machine, primarily those of the state, repository of all of the universal values associated with the idea of the public realm. In reality, what keeps the social order from dissolving into chaos, despite the growing volume of the endangered population, is the continuity or survival of those very institutions and representatives of the old order that is in the process of being dismantled, and all the work of all of the categories of social workers, as well as all the forms of social solidarity, familial or otherwise.

Profound social changes associated with globalization, economic rationalism and pluralism have sparked concern with social cohesiveness, integration and national identity in contemporary Australia. 'Social capital' is frequently invoked as the phenomenon that can restore cohesiveness and integration.

### **Leadership, democracy and the role of non profit organisations in social change.**

Non profit organisations are essential in a healthy democracy. They provide a platform for diverse views to be heard and for individuals and communities to participate in public life. While Australia is a prosperous, thriving democracy, there are significant numbers of citizens who are economically, socially and politically excluded. Non-profit organisations can play a leadership role in strengthening our democracy through promoting participation and by working to reduce disadvantage.

Australia's non profit sector is enormously diverse, traversing fields such as education, culture and recreation, the environment, health, research and social services. A wide range of non profit organisations, peak bodies, coalitions and committees advocate for justice and fairness in Australia. The non profit sector makes a substantial contribution to Australia's economic wellbeing by providing services, jobs and infrastructure.\*9.

**Increasing public participation.** The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) advocates for increased levels of public participation in the work of government. This gives government the opportunity to draw on diverse sources of information and different perspectives as part of the policymaking process. When greater numbers of people participate in civic life governments and democratic processes are more representative, accountable and transparent. Increased public participation also strengthens trust in public institutions.

#### **Notes:**

9. Maddison, S., Dennis, R., and Hamilton, C. *Silencing Dissent: Non-government organisations and Australian democracy*. Discussion Paper 65, The Australia Institute. June 2004.

See also: Volunteering Australia <http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org>

Thirty-four per cent of adult Australians\*<sup>10</sup> volunteer for one of Australia's 700,000 non profit organizations\*<sup>11</sup>. Australian non profit organizations increase public participation in the work of government by supporting marginalised individuals and communities to become active participants in all aspects of life including employment, education, local politics and volunteering. Non profits are especially well placed for this role as they provide a local, accessible service which can respond and adapt to the needs and strengths of local communities, especially in remote and rural communities.

**Increasing social cohesion.** Democratic governments need a basic level of trust among their citizens - or social cohesion - if they are to function well. Social cohesion generates community participation and supportive relationships and networks. High levels of social cohesion help improve the performance of democratic institutions and increase their capacity to work for the greatest good.

**Shaping social policy.** Non profit organisations are uniquely placed to help shape social policy in Australia. Good policy reflects a range of perspectives and is based on real people's lives and experiences. By drawing on their 'on-the-ground' experience, non profits are able to promote the interests of individuals and communities. Non profits can identify new emerging needs, document good practice, articulate ideas and solutions and lobby for policy change. Increasingly, non profits are supporting calls for change using evidence from rigorous evaluations and research in partnership with all sectors and especially universities.

Non profit organisations must continue raising social policy issues and initiating productive debate across sectors, backed-up by research evidence and on-the-ground service-delivery experience. The non-profit sector gains its legitimacy through facilitating participation and social action in the communities and areas where we work, and by demonstrating leadership through ethical and accountable behaviour in internal operations - not just in what we do but in how we do things.

Australians now need a government with the vision and leadership to create a modern nation, fairly representative of the best attributes of the national culture upon which this nation was founded. Australia has entered the global era. Governments stress the urgent necessity for Australia to pursue the opportunities and to confront the challenges which present themselves in the context of the transformation of Australia into an internationally competitive, post-industrial economy in the Asia-Pacific region. The challenge for Australian leadership is to internationalise the economy within the framework of social justice and equity thereby retaining the deepest and oldest Australian values. *egalitarianism: a fair go: equality of opportunity*. Collaboration between communities and the non profit, government and private sectors will help restore these values through positive social change.

### **Democratic Citizenship and Freedom Of Political Expression**

Who's country is this anyway? The future of Australian society rests not only on the quality and depth of thinking among our political leaders but even more on the quality and depth of thinking among those responsible for electing them. In a democracy, "we the people" – the body of citizens – must rule. Elected officials are only our representatives; they exercise the powers we grant to them. The citizen bears not only rights, but responsibilities. The strength and resilience, the purpose and ends, of democracy rests upon the active participation of the citizenry. That is the importance of John Locke's famous notion that legitimate government is based on the consent of the governed.

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#### **Notes:**

10 & 11. Non-Profit Institutions Satellite Accounts, Australian Bureau of Statistics 2002, ABS cat. No. 5256.0, ABS, Canberra.

## Social Inclusion.

Social inclusion is not just about welfare. Social Inclusion is about active citizenship and participation. Inclusive societies are societies where diversity is valued and where all citizens have the means and opportunity to participate and prosper in the civic, cultural, social and economic life of the community.

The Australian Government's Principles for Social Inclusion in Australia were developed with advice from the Australian Social Inclusion Board to guide individuals, business and community organisations, and government on how to take a socially inclusive approach to their activities.

The Australian Government's social inclusion agenda is a whole-of-government approach to provide opportunities for all Australians to participate in their local community and Australian society. This social inclusion agenda recognises the importance of allowing all Australians:

- the opportunity to work
- to access the services they need
- to connect with their family and friends
- to become involved in their local community
- to have the skills to deal with crises when they might arise, and
- to have the chance to make their voices heard. It is also about recognising there are barriers that prevent participation.

In implementing its social inclusion agenda, the Government is changing the way government policies and programs are designed, developed and co-ordinated across government. This is being supported by new partnerships between all levels of government, businesses and third sector organisations [non profits and charities]. New ideas or ways of working are encouraged with a greater focus on the needs of disadvantaged groups and places.\*12. States' and Territory governments are also approaching a social inclusion compact with the third sector.

In South Australia, Mental health problems are seen as both a cause and consequence of social exclusion and isolation.\*13. If the cycle of exclusion is to be broken, it is imperative that people experiencing mental health issues have access to appropriate and quality mental health services. The Social Inclusion Stepping Up Mental Health Reform Agenda shifts the focus to rehabilitation and full community participation for people with a mental illness. Rehabilitation for veterans suffering chronic *Posttraumatic Mental Health conditions, alcohol and substance abuse, depression and anxiety disorders* require *cost-effective, condition-specific interventions* at critical points on the rehabilitation treatment continuum.

The SA Social Inclusion Action Plan for Mental Health Reform 2007 – 2012 provides advice on implementing a stepped system of care and recommends the establishment of Community Rehabilitation Centres and Intermediate Care Facilities and options. Intermediate care is for people who 'step up' because they are likely to require more intensive care if early intervention is not provided. It is also for people who 'step down' from acute care or for those who require continuing care in order to manage their condition. A common clinical record shared by doctors, psychologists and others is a very important advantage of a common mental health service [16].

### Notes:

12. See: <http://www.socialinclusion.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx>

Website providing information on the Australian Government's social inclusion agenda, including latest news, government announcements, details of the Australian Social Inclusion Board, and information on the development of a National Compact between the Government and the non-profit sector, outlining how the two will work together.

13. See: South Australian Government **SOCIAL INCLUSION STATEMENT 2009-10**. The paper provides information about key measures in the 2009-10 Budget that will advance social inclusion.

The implementation of a “common” or universal care plan for all public mental health services commenced in June 2009. An Electronic Psychology Records and Information System will provide ongoing recording of mental health clinical data [client characteristics, contact type, diagnosis, quality of life measure etc] needed for chronic disease management and care of veterans and the elderly, which will support and inform specific clinical network responses - continuity of care.

An independent, proactive Third Sector is vital for a fair, inclusive society. Recognising this value, the Australian Productivity Commission is currently looking at how to better measure the contribution of the wide range of non-profit organisations that make up the Sector. It is important to value the contribution of voluntary effort. A significant proportion of organisations in the Sector are completely voluntary, and a large proportion of the remainder are supported by volunteers.

Ex-Service Organisations [ESO's] are NGO's i.e., community organisations in the not-for-profit sector. It is not acceptable that many veterans face a **lack of access to services or coordinated, cohesive service delivery**. Strategies for improving veterans' Health, MH and Aged Care service delivery are a key part of the CC of ESO [SA] social inclusion agenda.

By way of introduction, the Consultative Council of Ex-Service Organisations [SA] is comprised of delegates from affiliated Ex-Service Organisations representing men and women from WW2 until today. They include the men and women who served in WW2 and theatres such as Korea, Borneo, Malaya, Vietnam, East Timor and currently the Middle East and the Pacific.\*14. Many are the men and women who have borne the brunt of the fighting and represent the majority of those ex-service members with health problems. The CC of ESO [SA] took on additional importance in 1995, when the Repatriation Hospital was transferred to State administration. Such a forum permits the ex-service community of SA to 'speak with one voice'.

In June 2006, the CC of ESO wrote to Mr. Ian Kelly, Deputy Commissioner, Adelaide, to outline veterans' concerns with departmental arrangements for service delivery in Health, Mental Health and Aged Care. A meeting with senior policy planners followed on 25 September 2006. Since then, there has been no response from them to the proposals for improvements put to them. Faced by such bureaucratic intransigence at the Federal level, the CC of ESO commenced a round of meetings with key SA Government Ministers and their principal advisors.\*15. These meetings bore fruit.

The creation of an SA Minister for Veterans' Affairs means the SA Government has taken an important step to recognise veterans as a 'special needs group'. A Veterans' Health Plan is being developed within the SA Health Plan and a Veterans' MH Plan is to be incorporated in the SA MH Operational Plan.

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**Notes:**

14. The CC of ESO [SA], Chairman: Laurie Lewis AM, represents: A.V.A.D.S.C, Business Management Systems, Darwin Defenders 1942-45 Inc, Defence Force Welfare Assoc, ,Defence Reserve Support Assoc, Extremely Disabled War Veterans Assoc., Ex-POW's Assoc, Fleet Air Arm Assoc (SA Branch), Korea & S.E. Asia Forces Assoc., Legacy Club of Adelaide, Limbless Soldiers' Assoc., National Servicemen's Assoc., Naval Assoc., Peace Keepers Assoc., Partners of Veteran Association of Australia (SA Branch) Inc, Polish Ex-Service Association Inc, RAAF Assoc (SA Div), RAR Assoc., Defence Force Welfare Assoc., RSL (SA Branch), SA Infantry Battalions Assoc., T&PI Assoc., TB Soldiers AID Society (SA) Vietnamese Veterans' Association Vietnam Veterans' Federation Inc, War Veterans Homes, War Widows Guild (SA) Inc. 2/3 Australian Field Regt, 10 Battalion Association.

15. The Federal Government, through DVA, is responsible for veterans' health care. However, across most program areas, State Governments have overriding responsibilities for the planning, budgeting and administration of health and community services. The only major exceptions to this situation relate to private medical services, community pharmacy and aged care. The complexities of the health care system with its private and public sectors, primary, hospital and outpatient services pose a challenge to the coordination of veterans' care across the patient journey.

## A SOCIAL INCLUSION ACTION PLAN FOR THE VETERAN COMMUNITY IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Responsibility for veterans' care is now spread across several Commonwealth departments; service delivery is split between two tiers of government and across a complex array of public and private sector agencies at the state level. Veterans are now caught in a double bind between the complexity of their needs and the complexity of the policy and plans intended for delivery. For many disadvantaged veterans, this means that their complex, multi-dimensional and inter-linked needs are not likely to be properly met.

Many of the problems with Veterans' Service Delivery in South Australia stem from the inherent difficulties of implementing present DVA policy and arrangements in the South Australian system and environment. Over the past ten years DVA has failed in its responsibility to provide a targeted and systematic approach to Health and MH Services for former and serving defence members living in SA.

The multifaceted nature of veterans' special needs in Health, MH and Aged Care means that the services offered by any one agency can only go so far in meeting the complex needs of veterans. Separate silos of funding, policy-making and service delivery can be systemic barriers to providing effective care and support. Flexibility and cooperation across agencies is one key to comprehensively addressing problems with veterans' service delivery and to join up service delivery in strategic as well as practical ways.

A Social Inclusion Initiative targets weaknesses in systems and practices that need to change. Social inclusion and joined-up responses that cut across and through government departments, and form partnerships with community and business, are instrumental to the delivery of the services required to meet the multi-dimensional Health, Mental Health and Aged Care issues confronting veterans.

The Federal Government and the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986 [VEA], through creation of the Repatriation Commission and DVA have recognised that serving soldiers, veterans and their families constitute a 'special needs group', *ipso facto*. In 2001, veterans were formally assigned Special Needs Status under the Department of Health and Ageing: *Aged Care Act 1997*. The effect of this is that aged care providers need to consider the 'special needs' of the veteran community in the provision of care and planning authorities must consider the aged care requirements of the ex-service community.

At Commonwealth level, given that DVA Policy for Health and MH Service Delivery has been largely reliant on '*community based care*' since 2001, it is not difficult to see that assigning of Special Needs Status in terms of access to community based Health and MH is also necessary. Since the states manage the means of delivery, the same argument applies at that level.

The creation of an SA Minister for Veterans' Affairs means the SA Government has taken an important step to recognise serving soldiers, veterans and their families as a 'special needs group'. However, plans based on principles must be reiterated as 'rules', guidelines and procedures and authorised as such if they are to prove effective at the operational level.

This discussion paper advocates a Social Inclusion Action Plan for Veterans' care commencing with the formal extension of 'special needs status' for the veteran community to all levels of government and programs affecting Health, MH and Aged Care service delivery in South Australia.

A complete copy of the paper is available on request - Email: [norm411@bigpond.net.au](mailto:norm411@bigpond.net.au)

## Conclusion.

The unique nature of military service can be partly defined by an acknowledgement of the soldier's liability for combat operations which is both compulsory and continuous and includes the very real possibility of being exposed to the risk of physical or mental invalidity or death. No other form of employment has a similar liability. Serving soldiers, veterans and their families constitute a 'special needs group' because their conditions of service and the effects of their active service on war and war-like deployments set them apart from members of the general community and cause special needs among them.

Members of the veteran community\*<sup>16</sup> clearly fit into the category of those exposed to traumatic events, those with serious or chronic health problems and those at heightened risk of mental health problems and mental illness. The veteran community typically have more health problems, more complex medical conditions and tend to be more reliant on medications. Veterans need a health system that detects and intervenes early in illness; a system that promotes recovery; and one that ensures that they have access to and receive timely, effective and appropriate care in both a government and a community setting\*<sup>17</sup>.

Overcoming the fragmentation of government service systems for people at high risk of social exclusion, and in relation to important milestones in the lifecycle, such as transitions from adolescence to adulthood or the end of working life, or transitions from Service to civilian life is a priority. Giving priority to early intervention and prevention means focusing on younger veterans, their partners and children, on the early identification of potential problems, and on taking effective action to tackle them in a timely manner.

We now live in a culture, and are subject to news and opinion media, largely dominated by a mindset that is global, "progressive" and deconstructionist – that is, it seeks to deconstruct traditional Australian culture and remake it into something totally different. This is a form of bias in itself. Yet it is so pervasive in the fabric of our world that its adherents, unconsciously perhaps, accept it as the only possible worldview. It is like the default setting of our culture, and anyone who clings to an older, more traditional or historically derived worldview is the one accused of holding a bias. It is time for us to say that the most enduring and endearing Australian value is belief in **A Fair Go**.<sup>\*18</sup>

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### Notes:

16. The Department of Health and Ageing has defined a member of the veteran community as '... a veteran of the Australian Defence Force or of an allied defence force; or a spouse, widow or widower of a person mentioned above'. See: The definition of a veteran under the Aged Care Act 1997. For access to MH services, we would extend that definition to include dependent children.

17. DVA: *Towards Better Mental Health for the Veteran Community : Mental Health Policy and Strategic Direction, 2001*.

The terms '*community-based care*' and '*community-based services*' are used broadly throughout DVA papers and this paper to refer to services that provide treatment, rehabilitation and support to persons who are not currently admitted patients in hospital care.

See also: DVA: Mental Health Policy Section (2004) *Repatriation Commission response to The Pathways to care Report*.

See also: DVA Fact Sheet: HSV07 Special Needs Status for the Veteran Community in Australian Government Aged Care Planning. Culturally specific care is now a well established principle among players on the international scene and domestically in multi-cultural Australia. Advice and instruction on cultural specifics may be found in, for example, DFAT and DI&C manuals and guidelines, or standards for health service delivery [*passim*]. Some specific physical and MH needs of veterans are detailed in DVA/ACPMH MH Advice Book, July 2007.

See also: DVA *Mental Health Advice Book* and a *Practitioner Guide* prepared by the ACPMH, July 2007.

18. *A Fair Go: Report on Compensation for Veterans and War Widows*, commissioned by the then Minister for VA Senator John Faulkner, March 1994.

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DVA *Mental Health Advice Book* and a *Practitioner Guide* prepared by the ACPMH, July 2007.

DVA Fact Sheets:

HSV07 Special Needs Status for the Veteran Community in Australian Government Aged Care Planning.

HSV08 Special Needs Status in Aged Care Planning Explained for Members of the Veteran Community.

*Has the time come for the Australian community to  
recognise and pay Australia's strategic corporals more  
for what they do?*

Dr Bob Breen

Research Fellow, Official History of Australian Peacekeeping,  
Humanitarian and post-Cold War Operations

**DFWA Forum 22 October 2009**

**Introduction**

The young men and women of the Australian armed forces should be proud of their regional and international performance on operations over the past 20 years. In terms of outcomes, they have met the expectations of governments and justifiably earned, and continue to enjoy, widespread public support and admiration, as well as regional and international recognition and praise.

Before and since the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney, the Australian community has been proud - and continues to be proud - of the performance of young men and women who represent Australia in international sporting competition. The world acknowledges the prowess of Australian sportsmen and sportswomen.

Many Australians are also devoted to and derive great enjoyment from a wide variety of televised sports. We admire the young men and women who play those games. Indeed, many sportsmen and sportswomen become inspirational role models of courage, commitment and teamwork.

There is no connection between the nature and purpose of the collective effort of young Australians on combat operations and the nature and purpose of the collective effort of young Australians in a professional sporting team. The two activities are not alike. War and sport are opposites. But there is a comparison between the financial value the Australian people put on sport in contrast to military service. The comparison is that over time as more has been asked of sportsmen and sportswomen and the media has given millions of people instant access to sporting contests, the pay and conditions of employment for players and participants in sport have increased significantly. In contrast, as more has been asked of junior military leaders and small teams and the world looks over their shoulders and holds them accountable for every time they and their soldiers pull the trigger responding to threats in dangerous towns and country sides, or employ force or coercion on the high seas, their pay and conditions of employment have not been aligned to their increased responsibilities and accountabilities.

Another feature of modern military service is that not only have the demands and media exposure increased, but also the consequences of the good and bad decisions of junior military leaders and small teams. This paper focuses on Australian strategic corporals. General Charles C. Krulak, Commandant of the US Marine Corps, coined the term ‘strategic corporal’ in 1999 to acknowledge the importance of corporals during modern ‘three block’ land operations.<sup>1</sup> Subsequent coalition operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have vindicated his observations and predictions on the increasing political, moral and cultural complexity of military operations and the strategic embarrassment of unethical behavior of junior leaders and small teams.

Increasingly, it is the interaction between corporals and soldiers and the local populace—with whom they will probably share neither a common language nor cultural and religious values—that will decide who will succeed in fourth generation warfare in the future. The Australian Army foresees this warfare as ‘complex war fighting’ in ambiguous, multilateral, rapidly changing and chaotic battle spaces.<sup>2</sup> Strategic corporals are junior military leaders whose judgement, personal conduct and tactical decisions on operations may have strategic significance that reaches far beyond their individual actions.

Strategic significance can come from both good and bad decisions. The outcomes of error can vary from the embarrassment of adverse media attention, the alienation of the local populace, or an escalation of violence that leads to war. Conversely, the fruits of good decisions can range from the projection of positive images of military intervention to viewers and commentators around the world, to the defeat of hostile groups and a boost in the morale of civil society in a country that lost hope for a peaceful future. These are junior leaders with extraordinary influence on an Information Age battlefield. This paper argues that sometimes the professional and personal actions of these junior military leaders can have strategic repercussions and that there is a case for more acknowledgment and reward.

The Australian community invests billions of dollars in maritime and air power to hit and destroy targets in the defence of Australia's sovereignty and Australia's interests overseas. The time has come to complement this investment with ‘human factor’ investments in careful recruitment, increased remuneration and high-quality training for high-calibre individuals, who may wear the junior rank of corporal or leading seaman, but carry strategic responsibilities on operations. It may even be time to acknowledge strategically-important decisions and reward them with bonus payments that will create incentives for junior leaders to keep the bigger picture in mind when making tactical decisions that may have strategic consequences.

The aim of this paper is to share research on Australia’s strategic corporals to make a case for their acknowledgment and reward. Corporal and its naval equivalent is the rank of those who lead small teams that carry the reputation of our country and the Australian profession of arms at the cutting edge of increasingly complex and politically sensitive operations. After the end of the Cold War in 1989-90, these junior leaders and small teams began operating in lawless and damaged cities of Baidoa, Somalia, in 1993 and in Dili, East Timor, in 1999, 2006 and 2007, in Honiara, in the Solomon Islands in 2003 and 2006, and now in the towns and villages of the southern Afghanistan. Junior leaders and small teams have also become involved in boarding ships in the Middle East, apprehending illegal

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1 Charles C. Krulak, ‘The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War’, Marine Corps Gazette, 1999. Also [www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmc/strategic\\_corporal.htm](http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmc/strategic_corporal.htm).

2 Colonel Thomas X. Hammes, *The Sling and the Stone: On War in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, USMC Zenith Press, Quantico, 2004. Australian Army, Future Land Operational Concept, *Complex Warfighting*, Canberra, 2006, p. 6.

immigrants and fishing crews around our borders and territories, and apprehending Somali pirates off the Horn of Africa.

Young Australians are fighting the long war against jihadists in Afghanistan and protecting our border closer to home in a physical as well as an information space. Corporals can deploy on operations accompanied by media representatives who will bring with them a global audience. At every turn, junior leaders have the world looking over their shoulders. While many of their successes and failures will remain unknown, ultimately their good and bad decisions may shape history in general and Australia's reputation in particular. While the collective actions of thousands of junior leaders and small teams were needed to deliver tactical victories in past conventional wars, the careless and poorly judged actions of a few junior leaders and small teams can deliver strategic setbacks on the Information Age battlefield. Equally, the achievement of a balance of compassion and aggression by junior leaders and small teams can turn a population from passively enduring an insurgency to turning against it and rebuilding a civil society that can defeat it.

The paper puts a proposition that it is time for the Australian community to acknowledge and reward Australia's strategic corporals because their decision making during modern military operations in places like Afghanistan, Timor Leste, the Solomon Islands and Ashmore Reef off the north-west coast of Australia can have strategic repercussions for Australia.

Before going on, three points should be made. The first is that the acknowledgement and reward is to be directed at junior combat leaders not the rank of corporal or its equivalent in the navy and air force *per se*. The second is that though in any given army unit or naval vessel on active service only a few junior leaders may end up making strategic decisions, the principle is that all junior leaders in prospect of combat or politically sensitive operations should be selected, trained and rehearsed in anticipation of strategic decisions because no one knows whose fate it will be to make those decisions. Finally, this paper does not compare junior leaders and small teams of the past and their acknowledgment and reward to contemporary junior leaders and small teams and their circumstances. Some things are different and some things are the same; an analysis for another paper, not this one.

## **Evidence**

What evidence do we have that Australian strategic corporals exist? Is this term just part of an American fad or a media beat up? We know that there has been worldwide media coverage of mistakes made by American junior leaders and small teams in Iraq in places like the Abu Ghraib prison and in Falujah in Iraq, and a continuing sensitivity to civilian deaths caused by NATO forces in Afghanistan. Aside from a handful of fully investigated civilian casualties inflicted by Australian troops in Somalia and East Timor back in the 1990s, and in Timor Leste, Iraq and Afghanistan more recently, there would appear to be few decisions made by Australian junior leaders and small teams that have strategic consequences.

Let me now take you through a few instances where the actions of Australian junior leaders and small teams have averted strategic embarrassment for Australia. Evidence comes from research I conducted in Somalia in 1993 and East Timor in 1990-2000. I can only summarise the evidence in this short paper. More detail can be found in a monograph published last year by the Land Warfare Studies Centre entitled, *The World Looking over their Shoulders – Australian Strategic Corporals on Operations in Somalia and East Timor*. Though the evidence is more than ten years old, my argument is that it provides a *prima facie* case that if research was conducted in Afghanistan now, the case more acknowledgment and

reward for junior leaders and small teams at the cutting edge of military operations in the Information Age would be strengthened.

### **Somalia**

Following operations in Somalia in 1993, the Canadian, Italian and Belgian armies and their governments endured the political consequences of media revelations of careless violence by junior leaders and small teams towards Somali civilians. The American armed forces in Somalia also learned the harsh reality of the Information Age when President Clinton withdrew them hastily after media exposure altered public opinion and turned a bloody tactical victory in Mogadishu in 1994 into a strategic disaster. The embarrassing withdrawal of American troops was followed by a withdrawal United Nations troops under fire a year later. The Somali people returned to the Dark Ages of warlords, violence, poverty and starvation.

The deployment of a 1,000-strong battalion group to Somalia in 1993 was Australia's largest post-Cold War expeditionary operation. It was an early example of 'three block' operations in the Information Age. Australian corporals in Somalia found themselves in close combat without warning, mostly at night, in among a terrorised and displaced population in the city of Baidoa. At any given moment, an Australian patrol might be locked in a savage firefight; another might be supervising the distribution of food; another might be assisting in the training of the new Somali police force; another could be manning a vehicle checkpoint or controlling a crowd at a water point; and yet another might be ducking rocks thrown by provocative youths and deciding how to respond.

The Australians faced three armed groups in Baidoa, a war-ravaged inland city dubbed by journalists as the 'City of Death'. Each group was armed and depended on criminal activity for their livelihoods and presented threats to the security of humanitarian aid operations. The first group comprised local gangsters, thugs, extortionists, arms dealers, brothel owners and drug runners. The second group consisted of nomadic bandits who visited Baidoa to rob, rape and loot. Incredibly, the third group was guards employed by the less experienced aid agencies. Many of these guards were not local Baidoans and, because they were armed and lived in aid agency compounds, posed a particularly difficult security problem for the Australians. Few could be trusted and some were suspected of colluding to steal goods from compounds and warehouses at night when they were supposedly on guard.

Aside from armed groups with a vested interest in actively preventing the Australians from interfering with their criminal activities, most local Somali householders and owners of businesses had access to arms and would use them to protect their lives and property. Operating at night in this foreign and often hostile environment, the Australians took great care not to be mistaken for the bandits they hunted.

While the Australian government was not protecting Australian national interests by deploying a combat battalion group to Somalia in 1993, Australia's reputation and that of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) were at stake. Australian corporals and their men were ordered to operate under strictly defensive Rules of Engagement (ROE). They were there to deter threats to the distribution of humanitarian aid rather than to seek out and fight potential threat groups. In short, the ROE meant that an armed person had to make the first hostile move before they could be shot at. The temptation to apply lethal force illegally in a highly provocative environment was enormous. The behaviour of corporals was 'strategic' insofar as killing, wounding or mistreating Somalis, who had not raised their weapons to fire at Australians, would constitute an illegal act. The media and expatriate aid agency staff were noted for their vigilance, and watching constantly for such illegal behaviour. Thus the

potential existed for Australia to suffer the international embarrassment of having members of its armed forces who had been deployed for humane purposes exposed worldwide as the perpetrators of acts of inhumanity.

Confined spaces and narrow streets and alleyways are two of the defining characteristics of densely populated towns in the developing world. When these spaces are crowded, hostile individuals or groups can hide amongst the people and potentially attack patrols in a hit-and-run action, striking quickly and then simply melting into the crowd. In Somalia the assailants' escape was often assured because Australian troops were reluctant to fire at them while there was a chance of hitting civilians. At night when the streets and alleyways were empty, they were no less dangerous because gunmen waited in the dark, ready to ambush. They remained concealed in buildings, ready to fire from windows or doorways in the 'shoot and scoot' action typical of urban warfare.

In 1993 when members of other armed forces let their country's down through careless use of lethal force and torture of civilians, Australian junior leaders and small teams did not succumb to those temptations. More particularly, they won praise for their firm, fair and friendly manner and the respect of the people through their decisive use of force when challenged by armed groups. The people of Baidoa responded by offering information to Australian intelligence staff that demonstrated their desire to rid their society of its criminal elements. The Australians were not there long enough to have formed a security partnership with civil society to have achieved this result.

### **East Timor**

An Australian advance guard of 2,500 troops arrived in Dili, East Timor ten years ago in late September 1999. Australia's national interests were at stake. Australian corporals held the future of Indonesian and Australian relations in their hands. Once again they found themselves in a lawless city in a highly provocative environment that was further complicated by renegade members of Indonesia's armed forces running amok while other Indonesian forces worked to assist them in calming the situation. Overly aggressive behaviour by Australian troops towards locally recruited militia groups and renegade Indonesian troops could have precipitated an escalation of hostilities and possibly even led to war with Indonesia.

Once Dili was secure, Australian troops moved to seal the East Timor–West Timor border and detain any infiltrators. Australian troops found themselves in a precarious situation, facing the armed forces of their nearest and most powerful neighbour along a poorly marked border. Once again, the strategic consequence of an accidental and badly managed armed clash between Australian and Indonesian forces could have been an escalation in hostilities.

In 2006 Australian troops were back in Dili amongst a newly independent people who were on the brink of civil war. Amidst provocation from criminal gangs and violent ethnic groups as well as mutinous soldiers and police, Australian corporals had to ensure that their responses calmed rather than aggravated what their commander described as 'literally hundreds of unexpected events—incidents that you would not have encountered in your wildest dreams'.<sup>3</sup>

### **Observations**

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<sup>3</sup> 'An Interview with Brigadier Mick Slater, Commander JTF 631', *Australian Army Journal*, vol. III, no. 2, 2006, p. 5.

Australian corporals and their men in both Baidoa and Dili operated under immense pressure. During both operations, Australian forces were expected to arrive on time and in good order, ready to achieve quick results. In Somalia, junior leaders and their small teams arrived in Baidoa having had little sleep, and began operations immediately. In East Timor, they arrived in Dili, again with little sleep, carrying heavy loads in a hot climate, and also began patrolling straightaway. Thus, while sleep deprived, heavily burdened, unacclimatised and with little situational awareness, corporals had to maintain their composure and control their troops while being provoked.

The first media images of both operations to be broadcast were critically important. In Somalia, a scrum of media representatives accompanied the first patrols into Baidoa and broadcast images back to Australia and around the world within a few hours. In East Timor the arrival of Australian troops in Dili was 'live to air'. The evening news was replete with images of corporals and their men apprehending militiamen and patrolling through the streets. The first impressions of the campaign had to be positive, the performance of junior leaders and their teams had to be exemplary and contact with the media had to be carefully considered.

First impressions were also crucial for increasing the confidence of nations considering making contributions to Somalia and East Timor. Other nations may have been reneged had there been Australian casualties soon after arrival in Baidoa or had there been controversy over Australian heavy-handedness. Casualties or scandal would have certainly tested Australian resolve to complete the four and a half month commitment in Somalia. For East Timor, it was the successful conduct of the first 72 hours of operations in Dili that secured the dispatch of international contingents that were to follow. Some regional and international contributions may have not have eventuated had there been an escalation in hostilities between Australian and Indonesian forces as a result of an act of ill-discipline by either side.

Australia's junior leaders and small teams did a great job. Their personal and professional conduct in Somalia and East Timor are Exhibits A and B for change in the acknowledgement and reward the Australian people afford to strategic corporals. If you remain unconvinced, I would draw your attention to the books *A Little Bit of Hope: Australian Force Somalia*, and *Mission Accomplished: Australian Defence Force participation in the International Force East Timor* both published by Allen and Unwin.

## **Afghanistan**

Is this evidence out of date? Could it be that there were Australian strategic corporals in Somalia and East Timor but there are none in Afghanistan? Would careless personal and professional behaviour cause a strategic problem for Australia in a land so distant from Australian shores? I would offer that there are Australian strategic corporals in Afghanistan because once again, the job is not just to find and fight a lightly armed enemy. Australian junior leaders and small teams are part of a comprehensive counterinsurgency campaign. The main issue is not so much to destroy the enemy but rather to protect the Afghan people—to provide families with security so that an imperfect and struggling Afghan government can deliver basic services.

The mission goes further. Australian junior NCOs train the Afghan army, and impart not only professional skills, but also professional values. They are playing a small part defeating an insurgency by building an Afghan military capability. Their personal and professional conduct can also set the example for firm, fair, and friendly attitudes. Hopefully this example inspires young Afghan junior leaders and small teams to do likewise.

My point is that these corporals are bringing more than technical shooting skills and physical protection to the relationship between them and the Afghan people. While it is of enduring importance that corporals meet and defeat the Taliban in combat, it is also of enduring importance that they set an example at their personal and professional conduct and maintain Australia's reputation for firm, fair, and friendly relations. The Afghan people have few role models who wear uniforms. Australian corporals can have a positive influence on the conduct of the campaign in Afghanistan by recognizing their responsibilities to create mutually respectful relations with the Afghan people, as they did on Somalia and East Timor. If the cutting edge of Australian operations in Afghanistan was characterised by careless cultural and moral behaviour, as well as the undisciplined use of force, not only will Australia's international reputation be diminished but the Australian troops will also become part of the problem, and not part of the solution.

I am sure that Exhibits C, D, E and F for change in acknowledgement and remuneration could be found in the personal and professional conduct of Australian strategic corporals if research was conducted into their personal and professional conduct in the Solomon Islands, Iraq and Afghanistan as well among Australia's junior leaders and small teams on the high seas in the Middle East, the Horn of Africa and closer to home at Ashmore Reef and the waters off Australia's north-west coastline.

## **Conclusion**

Australia is engaged in a number of military operations both in its immediate neighbourhood and in countries around the globe, primarily in the developing world. For years to come, Australian soldiers, sailors and aircrew will operate with their traditional allies, the United States and Britain, in a long war against jihadists. At the same time, Australia will also have troops operating in the near region. There will be other forces on standby, ready to respond quickly to breakdowns in law and order that may threaten the stability of micro-states and larger island nations in the South Pacific.

These regional operations will not be contests against similarly trained and equipped hostile forces. Victory will be measured in terms of the hope and security that military operations bring to families and civil society rather than in the defeat of hostile forces in decisive engagements. Victory will also be measured in the willing allegiance of populations to democracy rather than the long-term occupation and control of towns, territory and infrastructure by Western military forces. There will be short, sharp and deadly skirmishes against armed men, often at night, in densely populated urban areas.

While no nation is identical to another, many countries in the developing world share similar characteristics. From an Australian military perspective, operating in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and the South Pacific neighbourhood presents many physical, mental, cultural and ethical challenges. Violence within many of these societies, both during and after conflict, has created anger and despair. Poverty, displacement, disease and hunger deepen these emotions. Unemployment and limited education among alienated young men provide a ready pool of recruits for hostile groups engaged in insurgency, criminal activity and violent political behaviour. The young men and women of the ADF will have to work in harsh climates within troubled societies that do not share their language, religion or culture. They will have to maintain their morality and well-being while deterring or defeating hostile groups in difficult political, physical and societal settings.

My sole point is that, in light of these conditions and challenges, the increase in complexity, the close scrutiny of the media and the strategic consequences of careless personal behaviour and use of violence, there is a case for increasing the acknowledgment

and reward the Australian people should be giving to their young compatriots whom they put in these situations. The time has come to elevate public profile of Australia's 'strategic corporals' and to explain the increasing demands placed on them and their small teams, and the importance of their performance on Australia's regional and international operations.

**DEFENCE WELFARE CONFERENCE 22 OCT 2009****INVICTUS: STOIC MORAL PHILOSOPHY AND THE  
PROFESSION OF ARMS IN THE 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY****Michael Evans**

In the new millennium the ADF spends a great deal of its time training and arming its military professionals for the instrumental rigours of operational service. We equip our military with the latest body armour, protected mobility, counter-IED electronics and provide service personnel with sophisticated medical and casualty services. In contrast, we spend much less time on providing our soldiers with existential or inner armaments – with the mental armour and philosophical protection that is necessary to confront an asymmetric enemy who abides by different a different set of cultural rules. We also talk a great deal about winning ‘hearts and minds’ but we do not provide our military professionals with sufficient moral philosophy to protect their own hearts and minds against the rigours of contemporary warfare waged among populations.

It is true that Western militaries such as the ADF all possess codes governing the ethical conduct of their members. These codes tend to cover a variety of social ethics, the law of armed conflict, just-war theory and humanitarian values but they tend to be rooted in law and psychology and social science rather than in moral philosophy which is grounded in the great humanities. Moreover, while modern ethical codes emphasise correct rules of behaviour, moral philosophy emphasises the development of personal character, the reconciliation of the individual with the social environment in which he operates. Codes of ethics need therefore to be

complemented by a strong focus on moral philosophy which will, to quote Tom Frame, permit the ADF to be '*a self conscious moral community committed to maintaining traditions that are essential to the integrity of its people and the discharge of its core responsibilities*'.

This morning, my presentation outlines the case for moral philosophy in the armed forces. I examine three areas. First, I look at the challenge to the military ethos from a Western society increasingly based on a post-modernist relativism, the self-esteem movement and the cult of celebrity. Second, I examine the case for a moral philosophy in the professional military that is based on adapting what Bertrand Russell once called the virtues of 'Stoic self-command'. Finally, I illustrate how philosophical values based on Stoicism might serve as a guide to today's military professionals in general and to our own ADF in particular.

### **Challenge to the Military Ethos from Post-Modernism and Moral Relativism**

The greatest challenge to the Western profession of arms comes not from our external enemies, formidable though some of them are, but from within our own society. The rise of post-modernism and anti-rationalism since the 1960s combined with the celebrity culture of the mass media and the social revolutions in youth pacifism, feminism and psychotherapy have created a self-esteem society based on moral relativism. One of the casualties of the rise of such a society has been what the American cultural analyst, Susan Jacoby, calls the disappearance of Western middlebrow culture – the culture which was traditionally largely responsible for supplying the armed forces with many of its best recruits.

Middlebrow culture was a culture of aspiration located halfway between lowbrow or common culture and highbrow intellectual culture of the *literati* and the professions. Middlebrow culture lasted from about the 1880s until the 1970s and embraced the best of the working-class and of the lower middle-class. It was a culture of effort and self-improvement that valued schools, the church and community and it aspired to higher education and appreciation of the arts. Middlebrows included liberal Protestants, Jewish families and Roman Catholics all of whom were proud of their family values, community roots and religious faith. In Australia, middlebrow culture was often found in the Australian Labor Party. Its rise and fall is well captured by Kim Beazley Snr's famous and poignant remark that when he joined the ALP in the 1930s it was composed of the cream of the working class; when he left it in the 1970s it was made up of the dregs of the middle class.

What gradually destroyed literate middlebrow culture as a bulwark of community knowledge and moral standards were the social revolutions of the 1960s and 1970s, the mass media technology revolution of the 1980s and 1990s and the insidious rise of post-modernism and moral relativism inside the universities. Middlebrow public values based on family, church and school have been eroded a tsunami of secularism and moral relativism that has left us with corporate media empires run by billionaires without civic virtue and an underclass of single-parent families, of mothers alone, of fatherless dysfunctional sons, and with dangerous varieties of street culture in which masculinity is equated with social alienation, drug abuse and gang membership.

In the midst of all of this, is the belief that popular culture transmitted by the Internet can replace middlebrow books as a serious medium for

education. In educational circles today one can find any number of defenders of the virtues of electronic learning from behind screens. But such people remind me of the guys I knew at university who said they bought *Playboy* only for its articles.

Two aspects of the collapse of middlebrow culture that have disturbed me most in my work at the Australian Defence College are the disappearance of essential cultural knowledge and the apparent end of the West's distinctive honour culture – both of which have occurred at the hands of post-modernism and relativism. Let me give two examples. Earlier this year, in a syndicate discussion that included a discussion of moral philosophy, a Staff College Directing Staff member began to discuss the Old Testament Book of Job and its teachings on the unfair moral economy of the universe. He was met by secular bewilderment and it rapidly became evident that no Australian officer in the room had ever heard of Job. Indeed, the only officer who could discuss the sufferings of Job proved to be a foreign Pakistani Army course member who, because he had attended a British-modelled private school in Lahore, had been exposed to a course in Western Civilisation and so had studied the universal parable of Job. It is a sobering thought that at a time when we are preaching the need to understand foreign cultures, many in our society barely understand our own.

Related to ignorance about the parable of Job has been my concern that in Iraq and Afghanistan we are confronting pre-modern Islamic honour cultures with post-modern approach to warfare. I am not alone in this concern. The Islamic scholar, Akbar S. Ahmed argues that the biggest weakness the West has in fighting against Islamic fundamentalism is that it is a *'post-honour society'*. He goes on to argue that the West's honour

culture has been destroyed by a combination of industrialised warfare, by psychotherapy and by the rise of feminism. It is certainly true that since the 1960s an anti-honour culture has been prevalent in the West. As the American writer, Tom Wolfe has written, the cult of anti-honour became prevalent during the anti-Vietnam War movement when draft dodgers were upheld by the New Left as heroes so transforming '*the shame of the fearful into the guilt of the courageous*'.

From the 1960s onwards, the Chevalier de Bayard, that 15<sup>th</sup> century exemplar of the knight *sans peur et sans reproche* was replaced by sensitive New Age men who wore Che Guevara T shirts and who read Germaine Greer. Rudyard Kipling's immortal poem about manhood, *If*, became the title for an anarchic film in which an English public school's cadet company shoots its own teachers. Feelings, narcissism, therapy, dysfunction and victimology have largely replaced honour. Even the criminal honour code of gangsters has not immune. As the television gangster Tony Soprano, puts it in one of his many visits to his shrink, '*whatever happened to Gary Cooper? The strong, silent type. That was an American*'. Today what passes for military honour is safely confined to the world of Hollywood fantasy in the movies of male and female superheroes such as Rambo, The Rock, Angelina Jolie as Lara Croft and Uma Thurman in *Kill Bill*.

Today, what Aristotle called *honourable fame* has given way to celebrity – that is fame without genuine distinction, fame that is linked to self-esteem without virtue, courage, prowess or merit. A powerful example of this anti-honour culture occurred in Britain in September 2005 when a new heroic statue was unveiled in Trafalgar Square next to Admiral Lord Nelson and Generals Napier and Havelock. The marble statue was a

representation of Miss Alison Lapper, an artist born with a rare disease that has left her with no arms and only rudimentary legs. Ms Lapper is portrayed in the nude as a tribute to disability and victimhood.

Opening the plinth, the Lord Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone said: *'this square celebrates the courage of men in battle. Alison's life is a struggle to overcome much greater difficulties than many of the men we celebrate and commemorate here'*. In her response, Ms Lapper stated *'at least I didn't get here by slaying people'*. The unveiling of the Lapper statue compressed into a single moment the three forces that have most undermined Western honour: radical feminism, reflexive pacifism and the rise of psychotherapy. MsLapper's disabilities were regarded as morally superior to those of Lord Nelson because they were conferred by nature and did not involve killing in defence of the nation.

With the Lapper Statue we have sympathy for the disabled replacing the honouring of noble sacrifice above self. It is a metaphor for how deference to virtue has all but disappeared in an age of celebrity – bravery in men, chastity in women; loyalty and courtesy are now mainly associated with prudishness and self-righteousness. The French Nobel Laureate, Albert Camus, anticipated this when he predicted that the modern era would be remembered by its capacity for fornication and sensational news.

We are, of course, light years away from the virtues of selfless service in the Western code of honour – virtues so memorably captured in Sir Henry Newbolt's 1892 poem, *Vitae Lampada*:

*The sand of the desert is sodden red –*

*Red with the wreck of the square that broke  
 The gatling's jammed and the colonel dead  
 And the regiment blind with dust and smoke  
 The river of death has brimmed its banks  
 And England's far and Honour a name,  
 But the voice of a schoolboy rallies the ranks –  
 'Play up! Play up! And Play the game!'*

### **Moral Philosophy for Military Professionals: The Case for Reviving Stoicism**

How does one, then, counter what the US scholar, James Bowman, memorably calls '*the gravitational pull of the celebrity-culture death star*'. Given the spirit of our age, we clearly need to arm the inner selves of our men and women in the armed forces. In order to accomplish this effectively, I believe we must re-embrace and rediscover the moral philosophy of the ancient Greek and Roman Stoics as taught by such great thinkers as Epictetus, Seneca, Cicero and Marcus Aurelius. Yet Stoicism runs against nearly all current philosophical trends that emphasise materialism, celebrity, self-esteem and victimology and is profoundly unpopular. As Tad Brennan comments in his 2007 book, *The Stoic Life* that a Stoic philosophy is jumbled-up '*mixture of tough-guy bravado, hypocrisy and heartlessness, neither personally compelling nor philosophically interesting*'.

Central to the Stoic school of moral philosophy is the notion that '*character is fate*'. Stoicism, in some form, underpins much of Christian theology not least in the famous Serenity Prayer: *God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; the courage to change the*

*things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference*'. Prominent advocates of Stoicism have included the great Prussian general, Frederick the Great, the Holocaust philosopher, Viktor Frankl, the great Russian dissident, Alexander Solzhenitsyn and the South African statesman, Nelson Mandela.

It is often argued that the military is naturally Stoic but the spread of moral relativism, the epidemic of PTSD and associated psychological trauma since 2001 suggest that this is a highly misleading belief. There is no such thing as a 'bulletproof mind' and as the *New York Times* noted in January 2005, '*emotional, mental and psychological problems will be the Agent Orange of this [Iraq] war*'. (NYT, 30 Jan 2005) Many military notions of Stoicism are often based on platitudes and common stereotypes about 'stiff upper lips' and 'can do' attitudes. Popular Stoic stereotypes range from the emotionless Mr Spock from *Star Trek* to Russell Crowe's Roman character, Maximus, from the 1999 movie *Gladiator* with his Stoic doctrine of 'strength and honour' and deadly skill in the arena.

In reality, however, there is much more to Stoic philosophy than popular culture suggests. It is a powerful method of reasoning involving the rigorous cultivation of self-command, self-reliance and autonomy in which one seeks to develop inner character based on the four cardinal virtues: **courage, justice, temperance and wisdom**. Properly studied and applied, Stoic philosophy offers profound insight into military life and offers in the words of former US Navy SEAL, Richard Marcinko, '*a spiritual and moral gyroscope*' for members of the profession of arms. As Marcinko puts it in his 1997 memoir, *Rogue Warrior*, '*It is my unshakeable belief that when . . . two intrinsic values – the total acceptance of death as a natural condition of life, and the total*

*acceptance of an absolute moral code – are combined, the Warrior becomes invincible’.*

In recent years, the most prominent and systematic advocate of military Stoicism was the late and distinguished US naval officer and Medal of Honor recipient, Vice Admiral James Bond Stockdale, whose 1995 book, *Thoughts of a Philosophical Fighter Pilot* continues to be widely read. More than any other senior officer, Stockdale – whose embrace of Stoicism helped him to survive seven and half years of torture and solitary confinement as a prisoner of the North Vietnamese in the dreaded ‘Hanoi Hilton’ – disseminated the value of Stoic philosophy within US and Western military establishments. In particular, Stockdale argues that Epictetus’s Stoic teachings in a volume entitled *The Enchiridion* represent ‘*a manual for combat officers*’.. Stockdale notes that in the pages of the *Enchiridion*, ‘*I had found the proper philosophy for the military arts as I practiced them. The Roman Stoics coined the formula **Vivere militare** – ‘Life is being a soldier’*’.

What are the central tenets of Stoicism and how do they fit into the cosmology of the 21<sup>st</sup> century military? As a philosophy it teaches that there is no moral economy in the world that confers fairness. Martyrs and honest men may die poor; swindlers and dishonest men may die rich. In this respect, the fate of both Job, God’s good servant and of Shakespeare’s King Lear the exemplary father, are reminders of what we must endure from a life that fits the Stoic creed. The spirit of Stoicism as an unrelenting struggle for character in a world devoid of fairness is hauntingly captured by the poet Aeschylus when he writes: ‘*In our sleep, pain which cannot forget falls drop by drop on the heart until, in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom through the awful grace of God*’

In the Stoic catechism one can never be a ‘victim’ because there is no moral economy outside of the workings of our inner selves. Stoicism is thus about empowerment by perception – a cultivation of an invincibility of the will through minimising vulnerability by a mixture of Socratic self-examination and an emphasis on control of the emotions. **Stoicism teaches concentration on what individuals can control**, what Marcus Aurelius called the ‘*inner citadel*’ of the soul. Stoicism’s four great teachings are

- The quest for virtue is the sole human good
- External goods do not amount to human happiness
- A good life strives to control emotions to enhance reason
- Virtue is knowing what is in one’s control and what is not

*1. The Quest for Virtue:* To the Stoic character is fate and character is formed from *within* not from *without* and is thus concerned with personal choice. Therefore, Stoicism is a formula for maintaining self-respect and dignity through the pursuit of virtue and the avoidance of vice in times of both adversity and prosperity. Since both poverty and wealth are external to our inner selves, it is our task to treat both of them as transients and impostors, to behold them only in terms of how they might be used to shape the essential goodness of our character.

As Epictetus puts it true wealth comes within and stems from righteousness, honour and decency viewed as absolute virtue. Virtue is wholly a matter of indifference to all things that are a matter of fortune including health and illness, wealth and poverty, and even life and death. The Stoics also reject the notion of collective guilt as shaping virtue. Because guilt is about individual wrongdoing, no one can ever be guilty for the act of another.

2. *Externals do not amount to happiness*: in his *Discourses*, Epictetus teaches us that every individual has a fundamental choice about living for inner or outer values. This is summed up by Epictetus's famous doctrine: *'There are things which are within our power, and there are things which are beyond our power. Within our power are opinion, aim, desire, and in a word, whatever affairs are our own. Beyond our power are body, property, reputation, office and, in one word, whatever are not properly our own affairs'*.

As Epictetus warns, *'as long as you occupy yourself with externals'* you will neglect the inner self. Since one cannot control external issues, they become 'indifferents' – that is they are outside our will. As Epictetus puts it: *'he who craves . . . things not under his control can neither be faithful nor free, but must himself be changed and tossed to and fro and must end by subordinating himself to others'*.

This is, of course, a harsh doctrine of human conduct but the Stoics never suggest that one should not partake of *'the game of life'* for worldly goods, only that one should not become caught up in the game to the extent that it reduces freedom of choice and the pursuit of virtue. A true Stoic will never be dismayed by any happening that is outside his span of control for as Cicero puts it, real freedom is the power to live as one wills free from external compulsion. One of the most fundamental of Stoic attitudes then is *'the delimitation of our own sphere of liberty as an impregnable islet of autonomy, in the midst of the vast river of events and of Destiny'*.

3. *Striving to control emotions for the purposes of rational activity:* The Stoics believed that all moral purpose must be grounded in reason not emotion. Consequently, emotions such as desire, pleasure, fear and dejection must be transformed into acts of free will. For example, one only suffers fear if one decides to fear. As Epictetus puts it everything is connected to *decisions of the will*.

For the Stoic, unhappy people are unhappy *because they have the desires of immortals combined with the fears of mortals*. They allow emotional fears concerning their bodies, poverty, worldly possessions and relationships to assail them. In contrast, Seneca writes, *'the only safe harbour from the seething storms of this life is scorn of the future, a firm stand in the present, and readiness to receive Fortune's arrows, full in the breast, without skulking or turning one's back'*. The central ideal of the Stoic will is to master all conflicting emotions in favour of the power of reason and so create an inner self that is in Cicero's words *'safe, impregnable, fenced and fortified'*; a mind and soul that are capable of functioning both in isolation and yet in comradeship with other virtuous minds.

4. *Virtue comes from knowing what is in one's control and what is not in one's control:* In the Inner Citadel of the Stoic soul it is important to delimit the things that depend on us and the things that do not. At all costs we must avoid making external material things our lodestones for happiness. Thus, a central Stoic view is *'Whoever then would be free, let him wish nothing, let him decline nothing, which depends on others; else he must necessarily be a slave'*. A Stoic only competes in the realm of moral choice in a quest for virtue and self-knowledge. As Epictetus puts

it, *'you can be invincible if you never enter a contest where victory is not up to you'*.

Ultimately, Stoicism is not an impossible creed. It is not about creating iron men of invulnerability who are immune to the ways of the world. Rather it is about fostering a spirit of invincibility when confronting adversity, setback and deep suffering. Stoic invincibility is not a form of perfectionism, but rather a type of moral progressivism, a journey never a destination; not an ideal to be achieved, but an archetype to be approximated. The Stoic overcomes by enduring and overcoming their using a reason and will-power that is born out of good character.

### **A Stoic Guide for Military Professionals**

Having outlined the basic tenets of Stoicism how can such a stark philosophy work within the military profession. I can only illustrate this by reference to the Stoic Guide to Military Professionalism that for the past two years I have issue to my students at the ACSC. This guide seeks to provide moral lessons and choices that assist in arming the inner selves of officers as they embark upon rising careers as the ADF's best and brightest. The guide contains eight lessons and eight choices.

The first lesson in the Guide and concerns **how a military professional should face his day** and draws upon Marcus Aurelius's *Meditations*. The relevant passage states: *When you wake up in the morning tell yourself: The people I deal with today will be meddling, ungrateful, arrogant, dishonest, jealous and surly. They are like this because they cannot tell good from evil. But I have seen the beauty of good, and the ugliness of evil, and have recognised that the wrongdoer has a nature related to my*

*own . . . And so, none of them can hurt me; no one can implicate me in ugliness.*

The second lesson imparts the central tenet of Stoicism namely **Knowing What One can Control and What One Cannot Control**. This lesson is drawn from Epictetus's *Enchiridion* and points out: *We always have a choice about the contents and character of our inner lives . . . Trying to control or to change what we cannot only results in torment. Remember: The things within our power are naturally at our disposal, free from any restraint or hindrance; but those things outside our power are weak, dependent, or determined by the whims and actions of others.*

The third lesson deals with how **Happiness Can Only Be Found Within** and again makes use of Epictetus's teaching that Freedom is the only worthy goal in life and that **'happiness depends on three things, all of which are within your power: your will, your ideas concerning the events in which you are involved, and the use you make of your ideas.**

Remember: The essence of good is found only within things under your own control'.

The fourth lesson argues that **Events Don't Hurt Us but Our Views of Them Can** and quotes Epictetus that: 'Things themselves don't hurt or hinder us. Nor do other people. *How we view these things is another matter.* It is our attitudes and reactions that give us trouble . . . Don't dread death or pain; dread the fear of death or pain. *We cannot always choose our external circumstances, but we can always choose how we respond to them.*

The fifth lesson upholds the truth that **Character Matters More than Reputation and teaches:** ‘You can only be one person – *either a good person or a bad person*. You have two essential choices. Either you can set yourself to developing your reason, cleaving to truth, or you can hanker after externals. The choice is yours. You can either put your skills toward internal work or lose yourself to externals’.

The sixth lesson points out that in the Stoic world, effective leadership and good conduct are dependent on a conscious decision to **Renounce Self-Conceit and Arrogance**. Living wisely requires the relinquishment of self-conceit and of arrogance because they both inhibit **clear thinking**, **As Epictetus** conceit is ‘*an iron gate that admits no new knowledge, no expansive possibilities, nor constructive ideas*’ and leads only to a dishonourable life of self-interest.

The seventh lesson emphasises **The Line of Good** and draws on Alexander Solzhenitsyn’s, *The Gulag Archipelago* in which the author reaches a true consciousness about the nature of good and evil and the power of revelation. As Solzhenitsyn writes, ‘*it was only when I lay there on the rotting prison straw that I sensed within myself the first stirrings of good. Gradually it was disclosed to me that the line separating good and evil passes not between states nor between classes nor between political parties but right through every human heart, through all human hearts. And that is why I turn back to the years of my imprisonment and say . . . ‘Bless you prison, for having been in my life’.*

Finally, the eight lesson concerns **Epictetus’s urging that** the virtuous life holds as treasures: *Your own right action, Your fidelity, honour and decency*. Virtue is not a matter of degree, but an absolute.

The Guide then goes on to deal with eight moral choices that face military professionals using examples from literature and history. The first of these choices is about choosing **the kind of officer you want to be** and is drawn from Anton Myrer's great 1968 novel about the American profession of arms, *Once An Eagle* in which two officer archetypes are contrasted a dutiful Sam Damon (a warrior dedicated to the profession of arms) and ruthless Courtenay Massengale (a careerist seeking honours). Here, an officer must choose either **'to be (like Massengale) or to do (like Damon)'** he cannot be both.

The second moral choice concerns the substance of officership as a choice between status and achievement as outlined by the great air strategist, US Air Force Colonel John Boyd:

*'There are two career paths in front of you, and you have to choose which path you will follow. One path leads to promotions, titles and positions of distinctions. To achieve success down that path, you have to conduct yourself a certain way. You must go along with the system . . . The other path leads to doing things that are truly significant for the Air Force, but you may have to cross swords with the party line on occasion. You can't go down both paths, you have to choose. Do you want to be a man of distinction or do you want to do things that really influence the shape of the Air Force? To be or to do, that is the question'*

The third moral choice is about resisting the influence of bureaucratisation on the warrior spirit and is taken from Emmanuel Wald's 1992 book, *The Decline of Israeli National Security since 1967*. Here General Israel Tal describes how bureaucratisation and conformity destroys the creative imagination that is fundamental to future generals:

*Officers at the rank of captain or major, naïve and full of youthful enthusiasm, believe they will be judged by their achievements. If these officers do not grasp that it is forbidden to damage bureaucratic harmony they will quickly be dropped from the IDF system . . . If they are able to last in an organisation which, by its very nature, enslaves and constrains the thinker, then they will eventually reach the rank of general. By then, of course, not much can be expected from them in terms of creative thinking.*

The fourth choice is about why one cannot be neutral in a moral crisis. It takes its lesson from Winston Churchill's book, *The Gathering Storm* in which Churchill writes: *'It is my purpose as one who lived and acted in those days . . . to show how the malice of the wicked was reinforced by the weakness of the virtuous, how the councils of prudence and restraint may become the prime agents of mortal danger . . . and how the middle course, adopted from desires for safety and a quiet life may be found to lead direct to the bull's-eye of disaster'*.

The fifth choice revolves around the necessity to make the best of adversity and recites the Soldier's Prayer from the American Civil War, a prayer that was found scraped on the walls of the dreaded Confederate prison, Andersonville in 1865:

We asked for strength that we might achieve  
 God made us weak that we might obey  
 We asked for health that we might do great things  
 He gave us infirmity that we might do better things  
 We asked for riches that we might be happy;

We were given poverty that we might be wise.  
 We asked for power that we might have the praise of men;  
 We were given weakness that we might feel the need of God  
 We asked for all things that we might enjoy life;  
 We were given life that we might enjoy all things  
 We received *nothing* that we asked for  
 But all that we *hoped* for  
 And our prayers were answered. We were most blessed

The sixth moral choice is related to the matter of religious belief and urges those who are Christians to affirm the faith of the **Christian Soldier's Creed from *Ephesians*** in which it is written:

*Stand firm then with the Belt of Truth buckled around your waist  
 With the Breastplate of Righteousness in place  
 And with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the Gospel of Truth  
 In addition to all this, take up the Shield of Faith  
 Take the Helmet of Salvation and the Sword of the Spirit which is the word of God  
 And pray in the spirit on all occasions*

The seventh choice is about the terrible price that may be required from conscience and conviction. It deals with the fate of Major General Henning von Tresckow, a devout German Christian soldier who was one of the July 20 1944 conspirators against Hitler. Confronting his own death following the failure of the plot, von Tresckow told his staff officers: *'When in a few hours I go before God to account for what I have done and left undone, I know I will be able to justify in good conscience what I did in the struggle against Hitler. God promised Abraham that He*

*would not destroy Sodom if just ten righteous men could be found and I hope God will not destroy Germany. None of us can bewail his own death; those who consented to join our circle put on the robe of Nessus. A human being's moral integrity begins when he is prepared to sacrifice his life for his convictions'.*

The final moral choice is drawn from the work of the great Holocaust survivor and humanist reminder, Viktor Frankl and takes the form of a reminder that at the end of every day, a soldier must remember his most precious gift from Stoic philosophy and that is: *'The last of human freedoms – to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.*

## **Conclusion**

For military professionals, Stoicism teaches that courage is endurance of the soul based on inner strength and steadfastness but embedded within a larger community of comradeship that upholds public duty and private excellence. It recalls Tennyson's famous injunction, *'to strive, to seek, and not to yield'*. Contrary to popular belief, Stoicism does not aim at making human beings invulnerable to adversity, but seeks to create invincible inner citadel of the soul in which an individual can pursue moral values. In a post-honour culture of moral relativism, A Stoic philosophy has much to offer those in uniform despite its rigorous demands.

The most eloquent tribute to the essence of Stoic spirit is found in the poem, *Invictus* written in 1875 by William Ernest Henley, a man who had

endured a lifetime of illness and infirmity but who remained unconquerable and who penned the immortal lines:

Out of the night that covers me,  
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,  
I thank whatever gods may be  
For my unconquerable soul

In the fell clutches of circumstance  
I have not winced or cried aloud  
Under the bludgeonings of chance  
My head is bloody, but unbowed

Beyond this place of wrath and tears  
Looms but the horror of the shade  
And yet the menace of the years  
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid

It matters not how strait the gate,  
How charged with punishment the scroll,  
I am the master of my fate;  
I am the captain of my soul

**Q and A**

# ***The Unique Nature of Australian Ex-Service Organisations.***

**Kel Ryan**

**DFWA Forum 22 October 2009**

**In 2006 I presented the findings of an initial study into why so many veteran and ex-service organisations have been established in Australia.**

**This study involved detailed interviews and discussions with 15 Queensland ESO's and established that while the RSL was recognised as the leading ESO for the first 60 plus years of its existence that situation changed slowly in the period after the Vietnam War and surely in the 1980's. I found that:**

- a. The absence of clear, dynamic and strategic leadership within organisations such as the RSL enabled and indeed encouraged, by default, the establishment of ESO's more in tune with the generation of veterans and ex-service personnel in the post Vietnam period.**
- b. The previously accepted dominant position of the traditional veteran organisations was being lost to these newer, more focussed organisations.**
- c. The previously singular mindset of the RSL in focussing on the needs of 'returned men' or veterans had not given way to addressing the issues relevant to the broader veteran and ex-service community.**
- d. It was agreed that the RSL cannot go back to the past and seek to regain its previous central role in Australia society, and**
- e. The RSL, if it is to survive the looming loss of over half its membership with the passing of the WW2 generation will need to define a new role for itself in the Australia of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This it is still yet to do!**

**But for a moment let us go back to the beginning!**

**In October 1918, which was just two years after the formation of the RSL, the then Minister for Defence, Senator Pearce,**

**“--- issued an order notifying all departments that the League was to be recognised as the official representative body of returned soldiers.”**

**This grant of official status reflected the Leagues standing within the returned soldier movement but with it went important political implications. The League even in those far off days was seen by many members as being too close to the government of the day.**

**Such was the power of this formal government approval that G. L. Kristianson in his ‘The Politics of Patriotism’ states that the initial period of the Leagues history ended in 1919 with “-- the organisation holding an undisputed position as Australia’s major ex-service body”**

**Here I will mention two essential points:**

- a. Firstly I do not propose to focus solely on the RSL in isolation or indeed on other ESO’s for that matter but rather to seek to understand those behaviours that characterise the ESO community as it goes about its work and so makes them unique. The RSL by virtue of its membership numbers, its geographic spread and its 93 years existence naturally warrants it particular mention however, and**
- b. Secondly until the early 1980’s the ex-service organisations focussed on veterans or ‘returned men’ to the exclusion of those who had not serve overseas. This divide between those who had served on war or operational service and those who had not has been a thorn in the side of the veteran and ex-service community since the ‘had nots’ were excluded from joining the RSL back in 1916.**
- c. It is interesting to note that the National Servicemen’s Association, which claims to be the second largest ex-service organisation in the nation, was established in part because of this fight for**

recognition. The national servicemen, who had served in Malaysia, Papua New Guinea and Australia, although giving up two years of their lives, were not eligible for the repatriation benefits available to those who served in Vietnam and Borneo on active service.

What I am seeking to do is to establish what is unique about ex-service organisations in Australia not that which divides them. Unfortunately though, it is the differences endemic within and between each ESO that dissuades them from working together at critical times.

The 2009 DVA Directory of Ex-Service Organisations lists 54 “organisations of a nationally based nature with either a formal National/State Branch structure or those with branches at a state level – “54! ESO’s’

Further the “Department [now] does not have any single specific definition as to what constitutes an Ex-Service Organisation –“but rather cites several circumstances in which the term is noteworthy. These include for mailing purposes, eligibility for BEST [Building Excellence in Support and Training] Grants and membership of committees such as the PMAC and others.

The Department however does recognise that a ‘bona fide’ ESO is an organisation whose membership consists primarily of veterans, dependents and/or past and present members of the ADF. So the descriptor of an ESO is now much broader than we have seen in the past.

So why and when did this dramatic change in the makeup of the ESO community occur? The change also altered the tenor of the whole ESO community as well.

While allegedly sharing a common interest, the RSL, from its beginnings had shown scant enthusiasm to join with any of the other organisations seeking to represent the interests of the veteran [and more recently the ex-service] community. This was from the understandable desire not to be held hostage to the views of other organisations which would invariably outvote the RSL despite its numerical strength.

**However if the need arose the RSL did work with other organisations as in 1931 when the Scullin Government sought to introduce ‘War Pension Cuts’ which would have reduced the pensions paid to veterans, widows, mothers of those killed on war service and orphans.**

**The National President spoke on behalf of a number of veteran organisations and in the end reached an acceptable compromise on the issue. He was adamant however that he and he alone would address the meeting as again, he did not want the RSL to be seen as beholden to or speaking for other organisations.**

**A fine yet independent line for the RSL! This attitude continues to cause anxiety among the ESO community to this day.**

**In those early, heady days the League achieved much by dint of the ability of its leadership, its membership numbers, its successes, and it’s well developed political relationships. The RSL was seen at that time as the sole voice of Australia’s veteran community. Its unique position within both the political and community life of Australia in the inter war period enabled it to foster a unique character, a distinctive culture that remains characteristic of the organisation to this day. The RSL along with the WWG and the TPI Federation are seen as the traditional organisations within the veteran and ex-service community.**

**My proposal to you today is that the history of the ESO’s in Australia can be identified in two distinct, unique periods.**

**The first is from 1916 to 1972 during which period there was universal support for the veteran community because of the flow on effect of WW1 and WW2 and the subsequent overwhelming number of veterans in the**

community. Their role was to tend to the needs of the veteran community particularly in the area of pensions, welfare and advocacy.

The second period is from 1972 to the present time. The period after the Vietnam War saw the election of the Whitlam Government which had been a vocal opponent of the war and conscription while the anti-war movement itself still had resonance within the community and the general unpopularity of the anything military saw a decline in support for the veteran community particularly those of the Vietnam conflict.

In 1983 with its membership declining the RSL approved a plebiscite resolution to open membership to all who had served in the Australian Defence Force for six months or more. This broadening of the membership criteria was reluctantly accepted, as long held beliefs were difficult to change.

Critically while broadening the criteria for membership the RSL failed to change its focus from the issues and concerns of the veterans of the two World Wars. Its annual congresses at both National and state level continued to address motions and issues relevant to these veterans.

Its Aims and Ideals which were, and remain today, the basis of its culture were not reviewed nor were they amended to take account of the concerns and issues of a newer generation of veteran let alone those Australian's who served in the Defence Force but did not go overseas. It was these very ex-servicemen that the RSL sought to gain as members but available figures for the years after the change indicate a continuing decline in the membership

In his Report to the 1983 National Congress, the National President Sir William Keys emphasised the League's expectations in widening the

membership when he said that it is “the new guidelines on which the future of the League could be based” Use of the word ‘could’ may indicate that even the then National President had some misgivings as to the possible success of the historic decision taken earlier that year.

It gives a strong sense of the possible rather than the probable. Membership figures for that period would not have given the National Executive confidence that their decision was to provide the boon in membership they may have expected. Expectations were not met! The membership figures show that in:

- a. 1983 – 270,009
- b. 1986 - 261,396
- c. 2008 – 189,350 [approximately 25,000 of these members are Affiliate Members of the Victorian Branch]

History tells us that with the formation of the first of the Vietnam Veteran ESO’s the words of Sir William Keys fell on deaf ears.

The character of the Australian Ex-Service community was changing dramatically. It follows that the makeup and public persona of these newer ESO’s varied from past experience as they sought to project themselves and their issues to government and the bureaucracy.

Mission creep is the movement of an organisation from having a clear and respected position to one that is broader, more blurred and distorted because of the breath of the new course it has set itself. The RSL set itself a new course when it changed the membership criteria but did not prepare for that very change.

A 1999 study found that members will leave one organisation and start up a new one in which they are free to implement their ideas. This study refers to five trigger events which prompt the formation of breakaway

**organisations. This is the introduction of conflicting ideas, their legitimisation, alarm, polarisation of views and finally justification.**

**Of particular note here is the mention of the trigger that prompts the breakaway or establishment of another group. It is suggested that the ‘trigger’ is the introduction, by those who would eventually breakaway, of conflicting ideas that are at odds with the status quo.**

**It can be rightfully argued that the culture of the RSL, the pre-eminent, traditional veteran organisation was not able to cope with the aspirations and demands of a new generation of veteran and the recently eligible ex-serviceman and women without overseas service.**

**This change markedly altered the political and bureaucratic environment in which the ex-service community operated.**

**From being uniquely focussed on welfare, pensions and advocacy ESO’s are now frequently called upon to broaden their perspective and address a broad spectrum of local, state and national issues. This is proving to be a drain on volunteers and intellectual capacity for individual ESO’s that have not developed the flexibility and the resources to deal with the changed, dynamic environment of today. The RSL is one of these!**

**The nature and role of the ‘traditional veteran organisations’ has changed and continues to change. This is seen to be both a blessing as it provides a choice of where to go for support but it is also a curse. A curse as it divides the voice of the veteran and ex-service community at a time when it should be united in pressing issues to government.**

**The question now for the veteran and ex-service community is where does it go now? Are the increased number of ESO’s an advantage or**

**disadvantage? Have the older organisations such as the RSL, the WWG and the TPI Federation lost their relevance?**

**Have the ESO's lost their uniqueness as representatives of the veteran and ex-service community?**

**Research suggests that old organisations are less likely to die than are young ones. Further it proposes that “what little evidence there is suggests that performance of the older organisations does not improve correspondingly with age”. What of organisations then that do continue but do not perform to expectations? These are said to be ‘permanently failing!’**

**Here the urge is often that such organisations are maintained because of the benefits and position the leadership, the members or individuals gain from them. In other words self interest becomes the imperative rather than the life and continuity of a healthy organisation. Is this the position the RSL is in at present? I would suggest ‘Yes!’ It has been said that only a war widow can represent a war widow! Is this correct?**

**I suggest that it is time that the RSL and the other ESO's redefined their relevance to the constituency they profess to represent. Failure on their part to date has seen the Government take the initiative in establishing the PMAC and various subsidiary forums which are being seen in some quarters as an attempt to ‘corral’ the voices; the ideas of the ESO's. All this was done with the quiet acquiescence of the ESO's or left them with no other option than to be inside the tent.**

**The paradox the veteran and ex-service community have in Australia at present is that there is the danger of simply maintaining the existing organisations rather than seeking to improve overall performance. The**

dilemma becomes one of self-interest versus the urgency and the necessity of providing dynamic, purposeful leadership for all in the veteran and ex-service community.

The birth of the many ESO's in recent years has surely put on notice the larger, traditional organisations. The newer ESO's tend to be more focussed i.e. the VVAA and the VVFA gained their initial momentum from addressing the issues of the Vietnam veterans at a time when the RSL was reluctant to do so. One could certainly question the need for two organisations representing the Vietnam veterans however.

The PVA is now focussed on the issues that affect the families of those who have served or who are currently serving in the defence forces, a task that has not been seen to warrant organised consideration in the past.

The RAR Association, dissatisfied with the response of the RSL to issues of concern to its members is now organising nationally. This association has a potential membership of 80,000 serving and former serving infantry soldiers.

Research indicates that the larger and older the organisation, the slower and more bureaucratic becomes the response to issues that arise. There are snowballing factors which inhibit older organisations from responding with the changing times. Among these reasons is that the larger the organisation the less benefit will pass through to the group.

Next the larger the group the smaller the benefit will be to the individual members and finally the larger the membership the greater the costs involved. Put another more simplistic way the larger the organisation the more likely it is to fall short of providing optimal benefit to the membership.

**Generally speaking however it will be of some comfort to those in leadership positions in the traditional veteran and ex-service organisations that few organisations in stable societies such as Australia will disband. Rather they gather around them special-interest entities and then conspire to continue existence.**

**It is appropriate to ask then what benefits are gained from smaller; newer organisations as opposed to the much larger older well established ones. The term ‘free rider’ is an apt description here as it refers to the enthusiasm of the individual members to participate in collective action on behalf of the organisation. The conclusion is that the smaller the organisation the more likely it is that members will participate and work together. The larger the organisation then there will more likely be more members who go along for the ride.**

**The veteran and ex-service community has to face its future free of individuals and ESO’s that are free riders; that seek to pursue self or a narrow interests and that simply distract from the substantive issues of the time. The multiplicity of ESO’s has done little for the cohesion of the overall veteran and ex-service community. Rather it has given comfort to those who would dispute the rightful claims of those who have served.**

**Much of the responsibility for this present situation can rightfully and forcefully be placed at the feet of the traditional veteran organisations. They simply have failed to adjust and to refocus to the needs of the rapidly changing demands of a newer generation of veteran and ex-service person.**

**This will involve taking on a judicious leadership stance among the veteran and ex-service organisations not a stance of dominance. This role should be one of accepting the place of the newer ESO’s and working with them on**

**behalf of the broader veteran and ex-service community and not against them. The RSL will have to adopt a patient attitude to the future!**

**It is vital that the ESO community work together for the benefit of the broad veteran and ex-service community.**

**If the RSL is patient, plans well and works in partnership with the other ESO's it may be surprised as to what the future holds for us all. It should not hope to gain its previous position.**

**Being confrontational will never build cohesion.**

**It will be to the better of all in the ESO community!**

**Kel Ryan**

**22 Oct '09**

***Hope is the feeling we have that the feeling we have is not permanent.***

***~Mignon McLaughlin***



# *A Wife's Perspective*

Mrs Bronwen Usher

## **DFWA Forum 22 October 2009**

My experience as a service wife qualifies under the term of the olden days of the seventies and eighties. I'm glad that the world has moved on, but I'm also glad that I knew a time when life was simpler, more reliant on self, when values were clear-cut, a time before our techno revolution.

The world before the techno revolution has become entirely irrelevant to our 'new age' Australians. Where the freedom they enjoy to do 'their thing' came from, is not part of their understanding. What is happening NOW is the only reality. The paradox of our time is that wider information has led to a narrower viewpoint; more qualification has led to less common sense; more possessions have led to a diminished values base.

The result of the rapidity of the technological onslaught, with its focus on now, has been two-fold. Firstly, it has resulted in a generational induced memory loss, a dismissal of history and its lessons as irreverent. Secondly, it has resulted in a disenfranchisement of the older generation. In short, the 'new age' thinkers have consigned the 'old brigade', their values and their contribution to Australia, to the scrapheap of a history, where it is easy to forget. For the first time in Australia's history, the country is led by a government with the 'new age' attitude.

Most of the Australian community consider Military life an honourable one, but they also consider that service personnel are well paid for their service. They assume that service personnel will be well 'looked after' by a Government who is always talking about 'our brave soldiers'. As society enjoys the results of the lifestyle the defence force has won for the country, it finds it easy to rationalise and ignore the exact nature of that service, its implications, and any obligations owing to those who gave it. Society sees what is there to see NOW; it has dismissed what went before. This is the major reason there has been a shift of assumptions and a change of attitude towards the nature of military service, and by implication, the attitude to the family life of military personnel.

Today, military family life looks similar to family life in the wider society, and unfortunately, this is the similarity that an increasing section of our Government embraces. Those who serve now and the present crop of advisors to the Government, have no idea about the changes in service life, the vast differences in pay and conditions from those who served only a short fifteen to twenty years ago. Unless they came from a military family, they can have no idea how great the impact of service life can be on a family. No matter what Military family life looks on the outside, its unique nature with its underlying differences and issues remain the same as they have ever been.

When I first became a 'service wife, of the Naval variety, I accepted that I was buying the whole package, man and service. It was a package based on the assumption of mutual obligation. In return for the service of defending the country and being at the government's disposal, and all that that implied; the government would honour its obligations to the ongoing consequences of that service. The problem with the contract was that the military personnel and their family's involvement, was up front. The Government's commitment, often only manifest after active service, is far less freely given. Military families are the ones dealing with the consequences of service and military families are dealing with the reticence of the Government to honour its contract.

The terms and conditions of service were solely predicated on the needs of the Government of the day. The families were expected to fit in; after all, the families had survived a world war without much help. I don't assume that the Government was deliberately callous, but it certainly lacked an understanding of the contribution of families, and it used up the goodwill and values of the time by the spade loads. Then, it was called the 'service ethic' .

Today society attitudes and values have changed. Most of the changes are positive and for the better. The role of the family in military life is now acknowledged as making a valuable contribution to the wellbeing of the Services as a whole. That value however, is very difficult to quantify, as the years of neglect to do so, testify. It is still an inescapable truth that those who marry into military life, must recognize that the life is different and that it must be so.

In the olden days, some Naval deployments were up to year, sometimes longer. Long-term separation, in an isolating world, with little support and consideration from anyone was the challenge. Keeping relationships viable was hard. Developing the fierce self-reliance and independence needed to survive, often led to conflicts when partners returned looking to take over the nest again, or when a partner returned changed by the experience of his service. Vietnam and its effect still loom large. Each deployment became harder and the lack of family support really mattered. The support offered by other service wives was often all you had to rely on.

Today, six to eight months is considered a long deployment. In many ways, it is easier to deal with, especially with the availability of electronic communications. There are many services offered to military families today. The problem lies in the plethora of information and resources available. Each of the multitude of agencies that administer them, has its own set of conditions, often one impacting upon another, and all being impacted by Fringe Benefits Tax and other tax implications. For example, the much vaunted government initiative with medical cover for service families is coming apart due to Fringe Benefits Tax problems. That is just the tip of the iceberg with one hand giving and the other taking. The other culture that has become the lot of the military family. Yes, services are offered, but by the time one condition after another is applied, little useful assistance is achieved. The system of accessing services is confusing and discourages participation. This has turned a potential self-reliant group of people into a group suffering the learned helplessness of technological and bureaucratic overload.

The system needs overhauling and coordination and above all, honesty. Using the Defence Community Organization (DCO) as an overarching point of reference would seem one way to simplify this confusion. DCO would not need to provide all the services just the information about all the programs available, and be able to refer enquiries on to the appropriate source. The ability of service personnel to opt into a scheme to authorize the family e-mail links to be used to disseminate all new information relevant to families could also be a simple way of keeping families updated and involved. Being a voluntary service would circumvent those who have privacy concerns and eliminate the information going to those next of kin who do not need it.

One of the biggest problems today for service families is dealing with their service member being redeployed to a theatre of war, when it is clear to them that the first deployment has already begun to challenge the mental and physical limits of that person. Wives are often the first people to see the cracks. De-briefing personnel from active duty is great and a wonderful start, but de-briefing takes time and follow up, over a prolonged period, should be statutory. A session for the wives on strategies to manage the stress of return would be very welcome and a valuable way to lessen the impacts on family life.

In the olden days, the basic rates of pay and allowances, for all ranks, were low. The military was not a career you entered for money. The pay was predicated on the fact that board and lodging was provided for the serviceman. We certainly struggled to survive on our one income. Pay scales now compare very favourably, to what is considered to be comparative work “outside”. However, the reason for recent massive increase of remuneration for the Military has been more to do with recruitment and retention, than service members’ wellbeing. It is a bandaid measure, and as such will have a short shelf life.

Sea going allowance, in the olden days was a mere pittance. The time spent away did not matter and the years of services mattered not a jot, as no incremental component of the allowance existed. The best we could hope for was a tax rebate.

Now the seagoing allowances are very attractive. Used as an incentive to crew the ships, they have risen even more speedily than wages. Incrementally structured, they range from good to very lucrative. I’m informed by a young naval wife that a mortgage can be sustained on seagoing allowance alone, after 8 or 9 years service at sea. Some overseas service now attracts very beneficial tax benefits too. Society and the Government just see NOW and are all too ready to forget the nature and demands of the life that provides that affluence and the fact that things have not always been as good.

Overseas living allowance for my husband on a six month unaccompanied stint in UK in 1979, was just 88c a day. Try living on that – even then! At a pound sterling a minute, a phone call home was a highlight and a luxury only afforded once or twice during the six months of separation. The family had to wait for the call, as there was no direct number I could use to contact him. Service families learnt the meaning of thrift very quickly. That at least has changed, but again, the change is adding to the idea that service life is no different from that of any other family.

With all this in mind, consider other social aspects. Wives were given no consideration at all, as far as postings went. The fact the wife of a serviceman had to give up her job was of no consequence. The service assumed that the wives would become the social welfare organization for families. Officer’s wives were certainly expected to take leadership in that role, unpaid of course. Getting a job as a service wife was hard as all manner of discrimination was alive and well. An employer could refuse you employment on the grounds of your military connection, saying you were not a good long-term prospect. The awareness of working women’s needs was in its infancy. There was little in the way of childcare facilities and job-sharing and flexi-time was still very much a thing of the future. Developing a professional career path when each state in Australia has different systems of governance, education and health was, and still is, difficult. This disengagement of a generation of service wives from the paid employment market, and the lack of job continuity and promotion prospects has had a profound financial impact. The impact has been far greater than the frugality of the one-income days in which it occurred. It is now that service wives suffer as the result of having little or no superannuation of their own.

Now the ability to job hunt on the internet before you arrive at a new in a posting location is a huge leap forward. Assistance to find employment is provided with schemes such as SWAPP/SELECT, but the slow uptake of this program is indicative of the complexity of its conditions. It is causing much frustration that a service is offered but in practice, given regulations and tax implications, is not worth accessing at all. Anti-discrimination laws have helped to equalize opportunities for employment for women, as has the provision of childcare places. However, as we know, childcare places are in great demand and often the best a new arrival can be offered is a place on the waiting list. Flexible work arrangements have also helped current military wives, but there is no guarantee that work will be

available, or that continuity is assured. That means that there is still a monetary detriment to the military family.

Service life is, and has always been, a life on the move. This could mean that you find yourself a continent, or sometimes a world, away from the support of family and friends. The likelihood of multiple moves is high. Our family had ten. Sure, these moves may look just like the moves of many families in our new age, mobile world. The difference is that those families have a choice as to whether they go, where they go and when they go. They know that once they are settled in their new location their family life resumes. They don't have to accept the dictates of the military imperative and the don't find moving and separation usually go hand in hand.

In the olden days for a wife to contact The Service was the last resort, done only in life and death emergencies. This meant that the wives dealt with all manner of things quite alone. This was a time before cheap airfares were available, and the cost of flights precluded the opportunity of visiting, or being visited by, distant family. The idea of military personnel leaving a family in the family home to ensure continuity of partner employment and children's schooling, on a 'fly in –fly out' basis was inconceivable. It is still not common, but it is now possible – and affordable!

The solitude and isolation of the olden day family is something that modern military families can never know. Electronic communications have bridged a gap that yawned wide for the wife and family in the olden days.

Mail was our lifeline, letter power ruled. The written word had to suffice, as even photographs could only be a special treat. The complexity, time and expense involved in producing them made them a luxury we could not afford regularly. Although mail was our link, it was by no means reliable. Postal strikes were a time of dread and although the general community has probably forgotten them entirely, they still resonate with the ex-service community. Often letters came in a group after a prolonged silence, or came out of sequence. Sometimes went missing altogether, or arrived after the ship had returned home. Many a birthday, anniversary or welcome to our new baby card came straggling home long after the event. It is hard for a small child to understand the vagaries of the post; all they knew was that there was no card from Daddy.

However, this time did have some benefits. Our children did learn how to write meaningful, well illustrated, letters. They developed self-reliance, they learnt how to deal with disappointments and something other than an instant gratification; skills that have stood them all in good stead over the years. They value friendship and take care to nurture them. They have learnt to rely on each other and are the best of friends.

Now, I see little ones keeping in touch with their dads via the e-mail and think on balance, they are the lucky ones. They can share daily events, the excitement of a footy final or school success. Anxieties and the need for reassurance can be more easily dealt with, lessening the fretting and separation problems that inevitably occur. As other families in society crumble around them, military kids need to know that a Dad or Mum, who has left the home, cares and is really coming back. Despite the streamlined communications, there is nothing to rival the personal touch. A story at bedtime or a chat around the meal table is irreplaceable. Society has become de-sensitised by the absence of a dad about the house, and offers little support to the service family. Instant and constant communication has also lessened the impact and understanding of our society to the difference between talking to someone in the next suburb and talking to someone in a war zone, (radio silence and censorship issues notwithstanding.)

Military wives had, and have, to be a hardy lot. With the length of deployments, it was difficult to avoid having at least one of your children alone. Childbirth was just a thing to cope with. Two of our three children were born with dad away. As the old naval saying goes, "Men are only necessary for the keel laying, not the launch". There was little in the way of community service back up, in fact I felt lucky I could even get a message to the ship announcing the arrivals at all. Ship-shore calls were expensive and often radio silence precluded even that means of communication. With the shortening of deployments and the control of fertility much more readily available, this aspect too is lessening. Those mums, whose babies are born now with dads away, have access to instant communications and this does a lot to alleviate the feeling of total isolation. There are services available to support new mums, and the chances of having family nearby are greater. However, when a baby is born, believe me, the only person you really want there is the one person you can't have. That hasn't changed!

In the olden days, housing was basic with a capital B. The choice of homes was very limited. No comparison to community standard regulation existed. Receiving a clean house was a bonus. The hours spent cleaning a house and taming a yard were part of the deal. The house was the shell, floor coverings, curtains and light fittings, heating and cooling were down to us. Hot water supply was scant, if we were lucky we had a water heater in the bathroom, seldom in the kitchen, but a laundry never had hot water. Houses were generally perched on the old quarter acre block. Personally, I found this the greatest redeeming feature. The children had a safe place to play and there was room for the vegie patch that was an essential adjunct to our economy. However, it was often quite an onerous task to maintain as a solo act, for months at a time, especially when you were pregnant or had a couple of little children to look after. A trusty sewing machine, a lawnmower and a range of tools was essential survival kit.

Now there is a choice of housing. Military housing, with all mod cons, is generally very good. More rigorous inspections and contracts with cleaning firms have consigned the 'horror' houses to history. Again society sees only NOW. It has no idea how much time and money the families of the ex-servicemen saved the government. But, more importantly, society has no idea that no matter how good or bad the house, the house is not quite a home without half of the partnership in residence. It has no idea that in the military home there is always that underlying concern about the safety of the partner who is away.

Removals are still a drama. Furniture 'disappearing' or being delayed for weeks at a time seems to have stopped. However, the pressure put on a family to sign off on a delivery before the unpacking is complete is still a problem. Little realistic compensation is offered for breakages and goods that are damaged. It is a fact of military life that fridges and washing machines all come with dents in them, and that tables and cupboards look more familiar with chunks missing and a few scratches to enhance their character.

I remember one particular move when our dining room table arrived sporting a large gouge out of the middle of it. The assessor calmly told me "Don't worry love, we'll shove a bit of wood filler in 'er" He was somewhat taken aback when I asked for his address. "Why?" he enquired. "I'd like to go to your house and see if your wife would like a hole in her table?" Our table still bears the scars.

Be it then, or now, the job of re-establishing in a new location is hard. It becomes harder and harder each time you have to do it. A service wife has not only to adjust herself, but also has to absorb the anxiety and grief for the children too. It can be very hard to be the one who must always stay strong. It is easy to fall prey to a feeling of disconnectedness. If the family is to interact in the community, the wife has to initiate and support it. Involvement in schools, sporting clubs, scouts and guides and the arts is sometimes hard to do, particularly as a newcomer and "the Odd Wife Out". You constantly

have to prove yourself and sometimes found your contribution was seen as a threat to the incumbent group. You just about established your credentials when it is time to move on.

“Changeover’ that period which covers the time just before a deployment, and the period after the return, is a difficult one. The wife has to be the strong one. Once the deployment begins, she longs for the time her spouse will return and she can share the load, but often finds, that far from sharing it, the load has intensified in the resettlement period. The children who have longed for dad’s return often find that Dad isn’t quite the same anymore and Mum just has to sop up the slack til normality returns, (if indeed it does). This is particularly true when a deployment has been a difficult one. Wives understand the causes of the problems, but that doesn’t make it any easier to deal with.

These issues are still to a large degree considered a personal problem. Now there are psych services in place to deal with some of the more extreme cases. Both then, as now, the military wife is still the first line psych-service provider. The military child is still experiencing these unsettling and unhappy times. I sincerely hope that the Government is prepared for the massive commitment it will have to deal with post Iraq and Afghanistan. The lessons of Vietnam are clear for all to see, but myopia in ‘new age’ people, is common. Given help and training wives and partners could be a valuable resource in lessening the impact of this problem on families.

In childhood, the importance of friendship ties is paramount. Leaving friends to ‘start again’ is a trauma. A sense of belonging to a community and a need for roots is very important to us all. Throughout a service career, a child may be asked to move and re-establish four or five times. Being a Naval family, we managed it ten times. Living in different locations does have some benefits and gives the children an appreciation of other places, but it does come at a cost. Most children learn to cope adequately, but a significant number do find the transitions very damaging and their ability to form friendships is impaired and they become withdrawn. In the olden days, children had little chance of keeping up friendships, as mail was the only real way to do so. The modern child has the great advantages of the electronic age. A child can be more or less weaned, from one community to another, rather than uprooted. However, establishing new friendship bonds and ‘fitting in’ is never any easy task.

Education is a *major* issue for the military family. Breaking the continuity of education is never ideal. Moving interstate puts enormous stress into the change and can cause long lasting problems. In the olden days there was little anyone could do to lessen the impact of the transplant. Schools were less aware of, and less accommodating of, the needs of the military child. There were even sometimes when service children they were viewed as a bother, because the differences in state curricula caused differences in standards. Little research had been done into early childhood development and little quarter was given. Parents had to pick up these difficult problems and work to solve them. This was not considered a service problem at all. In military parlance, it was ‘co-lateral damage’. We were to experience this co-lateral damage at first hand, and believe me it was not an easy thing to remedy.

Now, the first day at a new school is still daunting, but often children have been in contact with the school before they arrive in their new location. Having been able to see pictures of their new teacher, classmates and school surrounds, certainly lessen the impact of the move. This is not always possible as often a school can only found after resettlement in a new location. Again the electronic era can ease the transition, as records and teacher communication is possible. Education Liaison Officers and tutoring support is available to counteract its effects. Children with special needs pose even greater challenges for parents; again, help is available (with tax implications, of course!). Options are limited too for private education, as the location of the posting can leave no suitable school available. Waiting

list problems often occur. Boarding schools are available, but to a military family, where each day together matters, it's not a preferred option.

The single greatest problem is the lack of a National Curriculum with a uniform starting age. This change is beyond the bailiwick of the Military to effect, but as a lobbying group, it could be a great deal more proactive.

The appreciation of the unique nature of service life is blurring. It is being overwhelmed by the overload of technological information, and the buy now pay later mentality of the time. Look at what has happened to all that olden day service. Much of it has been forgotten, overlooked, discounted. The 'New Age' Australians, those who now propose our 16 year olds vote, are only considering the needs of the young. Not only has the contribution of the ex-service community been discounted, but so too have their pensions. At the stroke of a pen, Mr Whitlam discounted them. That discounting has never been restored. It compounds as each year passes and sees more and more of the ex-service community declining into genteel poverty. As the CPI stagnates, but prices don't, this is happening at an alarming rate. How a government can increase the Centerlink pensions, which are indexed above CPI because of rising prices, and not acknowledge the hardship of a CPI indexation system to its ex-servicemen is beyond comprehension. Defence widows find themselves in a particularly bleak situation, as their pension is not even fully indexed at CPI. However, don't worry folks the government tells us there is always Centerlink! Military families have paid for their superannuation, they have saved the government millions as an unpaid workforce for years, and put up with conditions untenable today. They have paid in struggle, heartache and loneliness and by living the service ethic. They did so willingly and proudly, surely they deserve the dignity of something better than queuing at Centerlink. They fulfilled their part of the contract.

Few people in our community today understand that some military members who, having actively served for years and years, are not entitled to the benefits of a veteran. These personnel were not in an 'operational theatre' for the statutory, (but arbitrary, decided) 28 days. The veteran is all that is ever mentioned our leadership. When did you last hear a politician talking of anyone but a veteran? All military members are at the disposal of their government and country in the same way as those with 'qualifying service'. Their commitment is no less. It is a difficult distinction for the families to understand. They often endured years of long separations and disruption to their family life. Their experience was just as lonely, unsupported and valuable as any "qualified" service family. They too shared the knowledge of the dangers of service life and held that subliminal fear that anything may happen at any time. The tragic helicopter accident in Queensland; the experiences of HMAS Melbourne with Voyager and Frank.E Evans; the "Westralia" disaster; the diver attacked by a shark in Sydney harbour; a whaler full of midshipmen lost in a storm; all these incidents testify to that. This is by no means a complete list, but the point is, that not being in an 'operational theatre' does not mean that the dangers and commitment disappear or that the ultimate sacrifice is not made. This official governmental discrimination does not recognize the unique nature of *all* military service. The mutual obligation that was undertaken when a service member enlisted is it seems, flexible.

It is unimaginable that even some ex-service organizations turned away long-term servicemen on these grounds. It mattered a great deal to those servicemen, as it sent the message that their service was considered only second best. The fact that such organizations then purport to speak on behalf of the ex-service community is not acceptable, and offends much of that community. Unfortunately, for too long our government just hasn't understood that point. DFWA, as an organization which embraces all who have served and all who are serving is much more alive to the true nature of the military commitment. This gives it validity to speak for the entire service community rather than for just selected veterans. The government needs to listen, as there are many challenges ahead.

What is happening now? New Age attitudes in our new age government are changing. Policy makers in our new Government, despite rhetoric and promises, chose to ignore their mutual obligation to those who have served before now, and endorsed the neglect of the ex-service community by previous governments. From this platform it is easy for them to seriously consider that by offering competitive pay scales and generous allowance and a new super scheme, it will be enough 'pay off' for military life and its legacy. The idea of limited liability is very appealing. Messing about with family issues and addressing the most obvious shop-front issues such as pay and housing and the provision of lots of seemingly family friendly schemes, feeds the societal perception that the Government is looking after the Australian Defence Force. These policy makers are new age people who compare the dangers of the mining industry with that of military life. They are the same people who have not yet learned the lessons of post Vietnam.

The goodwill of the military community that the government has so heavily relied on in the past, is about to run out. The families of the modern soldier, sailor and airmen are new age people too. This is why the new pay scales were needed and why they can be no more than a band aid solution. The expectations of the 'new age military' are many. They are no longer prepared to 'put up with things'. Society has changed and brought many challenges for the military, which the Government cannot afford to ignore.

Military families know only too well the unique nature of military service. While glad that their service partners are now paid as valued members of the community, there is a growing frustration and disengagement from the services offered to families. They are unnecessarily complex and convoluted. They are administered by a multiplicity of agencies that cannot seem to work together. Frustration is mounting with programs that seem to promise help, but when accessed, deliver little. Military families want honesty, not smoke and mirrors, or being fobbed off with political spin.

Service families want the unique nature of all military service recognized; they want an acknowledgement of the ongoing nature of its impact on family life. They understand the life and are prepared to do what they must to support their service partners. But they do need to know that when the initial job is done they can rely on a government to honour its part of the social contract it undertook to those who have defended and continue to defend this country. The Government will always get good value for its dollar from military families. It is time to stop exploiting good will and show a realistic concern and support to those who have earned it.

Despite the changes in values and attitudes as the years have passed; despite the spin and perception that now govern much of our society's judgement; despite the disguise brought about by affluence and technology, the service family remains unique in nature.

It is as unique as it is vital to the continued defence of this country.

Thank you.

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