



Robyn Collins
General Manager



Happy New Year to all RSL NSW members – we hope your Christmas and New Year were peaceful.

2015 saw DefenceCare pass a significant milestone - 10,000 calls for help. What makes this remarkable is that we started comprehensively recording information in our database in August 2013. When we noticed this milestone on our database in October 2015, calls had already totalled 10,692.

4,726 calls were for claims, 2,334 for community support (counselling and financial assistance), 1,018 for Advocacy at the Veterans Review Board and 2,340 from organisations including sub-Branches, Women's Auxiliaries, government departments and other ex-service organisations.

The split between serving and ex-serving members making these calls remains the same and roughly equal - 3,848 calls were from ex-serving members (or their surviving partner), 3,675 from current serving members and 347 from family members.

DefenceCare enters 2016 having successfully tendered to the DVA to trial a Peer to Peer Support program for veterans who have suffered mental ill-health as a result of their service. We are partnering with St John of God Richmond Hospital for the trial and are looking forward to supporting up to 50 veterans suffering mental ill-health as a result of their military service in this program.

We are also pleased to have started working with Auburn RSL sub-

Branch, which is providing funding to DefenceCare, so that we can employ a Community Support Worker to provide welfare services to their sub-Branch members. The worker will also help other veterans and spending part of their working week in DefenceCare.

This is a win-win for both our organisations – Auburn sub-Branch will have a qualified Community Support Worker supporting their members and DefenceCare will gain an additional qualified staff member. Importantly, we are making decisions together and being open in communicating our needs. We are excited by this new development and hope to develop a model that could be used by other sub-Branches if needed in the future.

PEOPLE WE HAVE HELPED

A veteran struggling to find a home for himself and his partner...



At just 12 years old, Robin was living in a boy's home, where he joined the navy cadets.

An apprenticeship at the dockyards in Victoria followed at age 15 and by 17, Robin decided he wanted to join the full time Navy and see the world. Robin came from a military family – his father served as well as relatives as far back as 1638.

Robin was in the Navy for 16 years, and like many, left behind his wife and family during his time overseas with the Navy Submarine Special Operations unit.

During his time in the Navy, Robin met, in his words, "some of the best people that I could have ever met in my life". He is still friends with them. His squadron was a unique brotherhood and to this day they can call on anyone for help at any time, for support or just a chat.

"The group of men I served with had

the most incredible set of skill levels, they weren't there for the pay and it wasn't a 9-to-5 job."

Robin's fondest memories of serving include being able to see places like Yokosuka in Japan and Singapore with his mates, meeting locals and immersing himself in the culture.

He recalls having BBQs on the casing of a submarine in the middle of the ocean and jumping off the side with several thousand feet of water underneath to go for a swim. He and his fellow submariners were very grateful for a shower every 10 days whether needed or not and has vivid memories of washing his overalls in the garbage bucket once a month.

Beds were shared, with the previous man's sleeping bag rolled up as a pillow. After returning to shore, all the sleeping bags were thrown out as they had usually rotted away. Robin also worked in black or red light for weeks at a time and never knew if the food had passed its expiry date.

When Robin left the Navy, everything went off the rails. He found it difficult to adjust to civilian life, with multiple admissions to hospital for PTSD and a significant decline in his overall health.

"The help that we have received has been unbelievable.

"I was referred to DefenceCare by the RSL Veterans' Centre, East Sydney. At that point we weren't asking for anything.

"When DefenceCare came along, I can't describe what they did.

DefenceCare paid for the CPAP machine, which assists me to breathe while I sleep. This machine is critical to my survival and we were about to return the machine we were renting as we couldn't afford it. I have a terminal illness and can't work or look after myself and my partner. We couldn't afford to live – we couldn't even feed ourselves.

“DefenceCare has also helped us find a home. They considered where it was, as we needed to be near the hospital (for my treatment) and public transport. It is also near a park and has lots of windows - it was very well thought out.

“Now we don’t just have an existence, we have a life with the short time that I have left and we can enjoy it. It is a about quality of life now, where we say what can we do today.

“I was in the hospital last week and all I could think about was so looking forward to going home and enjoying my home and life.”

NSW CLUBS

DefenceCare would like to thank and acknowledge the following NSW Clubs for providing funding to support veterans and their families: South Hurstville RSL, Moama RSL, Bathurst RSL and Merimbula RSL clubs.

DEFENCECARE STAFF

Given the nature of the work DefenceCare does, it is important for our team to be qualified and continue to update their qualifications. We thought we would provide the following information on our staff.

DefenceCare’s team includes:

- 11 with tertiary qualifications, two with counselling/social work and two with Certificate 4 in Workplace Training & Assessment;
- 13 who have completed TIP’s Basic Tri-legislation course;
- 6 who have completed TIP’s Level 2 Tri-legislation course;
- 5 who have completed TIP’s Level 3 Advocate course;
- 4 who have completed TIP’s War Widows course;
- 6 who have completed TIP Welfare

- Level 1 course and one, Level 2;
- 2 trained in first aid;
- 8 who have completed a Mental Health First Aid course;
- 3 who have completed Suicide Awareness training; and
- 4 who have completed Accidental Counselling.

DefenceCare also has a number of staff who have completed various online TIP courses.

MANAGING MEDICINES

Our thanks to RDNS for the following information.

Three ways to better manage your medicines at home

By Dr Christine Beanland RN B.Sc. (Hons) Ph.D. (Monash) Senior Research Fellow. RDNS Institute

Managing medicines is a part of many people’s lives. Today about one in five hospital admissions in older people is medicine-related. This means that staying on top of your medicines is important to keep well and active. There are some simple things that you can do to help yourself.

1. Develop a medicines support network. This means having a back-up in

case you have periods when you cannot manage your medicines yourself. One of the easiest ways to do this is to have both a regular GP (and practice) and a regular community pharmacy. They can assist you with record keeping, information, support and advice, monitoring your health and strategies for medicines management tailored to your needs.

2. Know your medicines. The minimum you need to know to manage your medicines safely at home is: what to take, when and how to take it, how much to take, when not to take it, how to store it safely and why you take it. Both your doctor and community pharmacist can assist you with this information and there are also some excellent online resources available.

3. Keep a record of your medicines. Keep an up to date list of your current medicines and carry a copy with you. If you become unwell this list may save your life. At the very least it will assist your health team to provide you with the right care at the right time.

(RDNS HomeCare provides home nursing, care and support services to help Australians live their best lives through better health and independence.)

CONTACT US

DefenceCare. Always there.

DefenceCare is a charity helping current and ex-serving members of the Australian Defence Force and their families in times of injury, illness and crisis. DefenceCare is part of RSL Welfare and Benevolent Institution and is a Tier 1 RSL NSW recognised charity.

ABN: 61 603 206 488.

DGR: 752 766 491. CFN: 12317.

If you would like to discuss how DefenceCare can assist you and your family, please contact us.

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