



Robyn Collins
General Manager



It was good to meet so many sub-Branch members at this year’s Congress in Coffs Harbour – thank you for visiting our stall, meeting some of our team and saying hello. We hope those of you who attended the health and wellbeing seminar gained some useful information and the partners enjoyed their Tuesday tour.

Just a reminder to all sub-Branchees to extend an invitation to welfare and pension officers to join the RSL NSW/ DefenceCare closed Facebook group for up-to-date posts on welfare and pension issues. To join the network, please email your Facebook email address to defencecare@rslnsw.org.au and request to join.

- In April:
- DefenceCare received 357 calls for help (a 35% increase on the 264 calls received in April 2013 and over double the 151 calls received in the same month in 2012);
 - Of the calls for assistance, 147 were for help with DVA claims; 29 were calls about appeals to the VRB; 50 were calls for counselling, financial help and other community support; and 131 were for a number of other matters and assistance;
 - A total of 146 new claims were submitted to the DVA and 56 claims were finalised; and
 - Community support active clients totalled 352.

PEOPLE WE HAVE HELPED

An Army family battling cancer . . .
Cancer is a devastating diagnosis for any family, even more so when it affects



a six year old child and the treatment is thousands of miles away.

For this Army family, there was only one answer – pack up and move.

Six year old Zach was diagnosed with a malignant brain tumour in late 2013, whilst he and his family were living in Northern Australia. Once the tumour was found, Zach and his family had four hours to pack up some essentials and fly to the Children’s Hospital at Westmead, Sydney, for emergency surgery. Zach’s Dad immediately spoke to his chain of command and they were supportive of the whole family going.

Zach underwent an eight-hour neurosurgery to remove the golf ball size tumour and then endured six rounds of aggressive chemotherapy during a seven month hospital stay. He then underwent a bone marrow transplant and another eight weeks in hospital.

Despite this treatment, Zach relapsed 11 weeks later, with massive seizures caused by over 30 tumours in his brain. This was followed by a further six weeks of aggressive whole brain and spine radiotherapy, which was a success. Zach’s disease is currently stable.

Unfortunately, Zach still has massive health issues that are side-effects of his treatment such as issues with hormones, hearing and viruses. For now, Zach and his family are trying their best to enjoy life outside of hospital.

“DefenceCare came to the rescue by helping us out with the cost of day care. As our family became a single income family once Zach was diagnosed, bills and day care normally paid by Mum’s wage became impossible.

“The financial assistance with day care has made a horrible situation just that little bit easier. Instead of stressing over money as well as Zach’s cancer,

DefenceCare has allowed us to breathe a little easier.”

A veteran and his family coping with serious illness . . .



Shannon discharged from the Army in 2006. After struggling in

civilian life for some time, the walls came crashing down in Christmas 2009. By mid-2010 Shannon was unemployed and, in his words, unemployable.

In 2013 Shannon and his wife lost their second child and in December 2013 Shannon’s left lung collapsed. After rigorous testing, medical staff found he had an aneurysm in his aortic heart valve.

After two open heart surgeries in three weeks, Shannon felt he was in a bad place. Although his memory is vague, one of the nurses during this time told him about DefenceCare.

With limited family support nearby, Shannon’s health problems were difficult for both his wife, who was eight months pregnant, and their five year old son. Four weeks after Shannon’s second heart operation, his wife gave birth to their new baby.

Shannon could not walk very far, let alone drive to visit his wife and new baby in hospital. This is when Shannon contacted DefenceCare and the organisation provided taxi vouchers so he and his son could visit his wife and new baby.

After Shannon recovered from his surgeries, he had to undergo another two operations four months later. He lost the top of his lung and once again was unable to drive while recovering.

Unfortunately, their situation was made more difficult by the fact that their five year old son had medical complications of his own and Shannon’s wife’s ability to drive to all their appointments was limited while she cared for a new born.

“DefenceCare supported me immediately with little fuss and made our world just that much easier in a time where help was truly needed.

“To any person who reads this, I have not written this as a hard luck or ‘poor me’ story. It is what it is. What I do want to say to serving and ex serving veterans is that DefenceCare’s staff are brilliant, supportive and most importantly, quick in their response time.

“I found discharging and applying for my service entitlements paralysing and many times nearly walked away from everything including my beautiful family so I wouldn’t hurt them. On the surface, the giving of taxi vouchers might seem simple. However, in reality these simple actions and the easy way DefenceCare went about it, brought me back to the surface and saved me from drowning.”

NEW TIP COURSES ANNOUNCED

The TIP NSW/ACT website lists a range of new courses (including online) for the second half of 2015. The website address is www.tip.org.au and click on NSW/ACT on the left hand menu bar. Face-to-face course options include many in regional NSW.

FLU VACCINE WARNING

The Head of General Practice at Adelaide University issued a warning about alarming early statistics on influenza in May and the likelihood of a bad flu season as a result. By the time you read this, winter will be well underway, but it is a timely reminder to consider whether you should have a flu vaccine. See your GP if you are concerned.

UPDATES ON STATEMENTS OF PRINCIPLES (SOPS)

For updated information on changes to or additional SOPs go to www.rma.gov.au. You can also subscribe by clicking on the “Join our email list” option on the left hand menu bar.

DEFENCECARE AMBASSADOR UPDATE

Joining Damien Thomlinson and Erin Molan as DefenceCare Ambassadors, we welcome Brad Copelin, Amber Lawrence, Luke O’Shea and Dane Christison.

Brad Copelin is a veteran with over 24 years’ Army service, on Border Protection Operations and in the Solomon Islands and in Afghanistan with the Australian Special Operations Task Group.

Brad now runs a specialist learning and development consultancy. He helps veterans with military skills recognition and gap training, with a view to them gaining meaningful employment. DefenceCare has worked closely with Brad over a number of years helping veterans transition to civilian employment.

Amber Lawrence is an award-winning singer-songwriter and winner of the 2015 Female Artist of the Year award at the Australian CMAA Golden Guitar awards. Amber has toured overseas twice to sing for our troops, and this has given her a heightened awareness of the risk our men and women place themselves in, and the toll that may take on themselves and their family.

Luke O’Shea is the 2014 Australian Independent Country Music Artist of

the Year, a singer songwriter, and six-time Golden Guitar recipient. Luke has been a professional High School teacher for 25 years; he is married and a father of three who proudly supports regional Australia.

Luke’s father Charles (Rick) spent five years in the CMF Army Reserve and his uncle, William (Bill) O’Shea, after initially serving his national service, enlisted in the regular army to become a career soldier until his retirement at age 65.

After losing a mother at six years old and a sister at 15, Dane Christison found inspiration from his grandfather, a former Regimental Sergeant Major and Order of Australia Medal recipient and, as a result, a life in the military.

Dane served in East Timor and Iraq as a forward scout and gunner with the 5th 7th Royal Australian Regiment. After two years of fighting for his life with PTSD post-discharge, he started a journey in self-development, travelling to the United States with his wife to research advanced programs.

Dane is the Founding Director of In and Out Fitness Organisation and has now helped hundreds of young veterans and families through volunteering, running programs and motivational speaking arrangements.

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.
ANZAC House, 245 Castlereagh St, Sydney NSW 2000
Ph: 8088 0388 (Monday to Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm). Fax: 9261 4558
Email: defencecare@rslnsw.org.au
Website: www.defencecare.org.au
Facebook: DefenceCare
Twitter: DefenceCare