



**Robyn Collins**  
**General Manager**

DefenceCare is now



officially RSL DefenceCare, with the name change approved by regulatory authorities on 1 June. We hope you understand that it will take time to update our promotional material, but we will do so as soon as possible.

The feedback from RSL NSW members is overwhelmingly supportive of this change and while we were always proudly part of the RSL family, we are now more publicly connected.

Since the last edition, we have compiled more statistics for 2015.

- RSL DefenceCare lodged 1,062 DVA claims (737 MRCA, 121 SRCA, 204 VEA).
- RSL DefenceCare completed 177 appeals at the Veterans' Review Board (including matters under the new Alternate Dispute Resolution procedures).
- 60% of RSL DefenceCare clients were in the Sydney metropolitan area; 40% from country NSW – this statistic is unchanged over the last three years.
- 79% of donations were spent on support, financial assistance and services for veterans and their families – an excellent result when compared with other charities.

In the last three years (to end 2015), RSL DefenceCare has spent in excess of \$5.5 million on services, support and financial assistance to Defence families in times of injury, illness and crisis.

It was a brave decision four years ago to invest in a new way of helping Defence family members in need – a decision that has led to RSL DefenceCare

(and RSL NSW), clearly establishing itself as the leading ex-service provider of support and assistance in NSW.

## ANNUAL REPORT

The RSL Welfare and Benevolent Institution is now available online at [http://www.defencecare.org.au/docs/DefenceCare%20Annual%20report\\_final.pdf](http://www.defencecare.org.au/docs/DefenceCare%20Annual%20report_final.pdf)

It features a summary of our activities for the year as well as our thanks to donors. We hope our donors will reflect with pride on their contribution to the wellbeing of veterans and their families through RSL DefenceCare.

For those seeking technical information on DVA legislation, pensions and traditional welfare matters, we suggest connecting with online forums. Whilst we can include some references in Reveille to changes and sources of information, online forums are the most timely source of new information and provide an opportunity for discussion and seeking advice on issues that are relevant to helping veterans and their families. If anyone has questions about how to connect with online resources or is having difficulty with this, please email [rcollins@rslnsw.org.au](mailto:rcollins@rslnsw.org.au).

As calls for help surge in the early part of 2016, with two record months and growth of 22% on last year, we once again urge you to consider donating to or fundraising for RSL DefenceCare. Together with RSL NSW sub-Branches, we will do our best to continue to respond to growing numbers of veterans and their families in crisis.

## PEOPLE WE HAVE HELPED

### A veteran with financial difficulty...

David served with the Australian Army on two occasions and gave almost seven years of service in a variety of roles which included in the infantry and as an air



dispatcher, clerk, photographer, driver and instructor. David's family has strong ties and service in the ADF and he intended to follow in his family's footsteps.

David recalls good experiences during his time in the army, especially during detachments to other units and undertaking specialised jobs and training. These positive experiences were unfortunately over-shadowed by events that made him fear for his life and led to non-combat-related post-traumatic stress.

The loss of all his roommates from Kapooka in a short space of time hit David hard. He had formed strong friendships with these individuals. Marching out of Kapooka and knowing that he had achieved his first big test gave David a great sense of self satisfaction.

During his time in the army David spent many months at various times away from home. Sadly, like many others in Defence, this resulted in the breakdown of his first marriage.

Since leaving the army David has found it difficult to adjust back to civilian life. For many years he has struggled with physical injuries and mental ill-health.

He has also experienced significant instability in employment.

“I have been made totally and permanently incapacitated (TPI) as a result of my experiences within the ADF. I am fortunate to get regular help from my psychiatrist, but even with this help life can be difficult. RSL DefenceCare has given me guidance to seek help from a financial counselor and assisted us with overwhelming bills that had got on top of us.

“Without the assistance I have received, I would mostly still be going around in circles financially. Their guidance has given myself and my family the opportunity to move on in this area,” said David.

“The staff at RSL DefenceCare have been caring and understanding of our position and we appreciate this immensely...special thanks goes to Peter who I communicated with.”

### **Veterans with vehicle repairs...**

This month RSL DefenceCare supported a number of ex-serving members who have been experiencing financial difficulty making payments to repair their vehicles. The pressure of financial obligations coupled with the need for necessary transport to attend medical appointments, can lead to significant financial and emotional stress as well as feelings of isolation.

RSL DefenceCare has been able to assist several veterans to keep their vehicles roadworthy, enabling them to continue to attend clinical appointments to seek treatment for a variety of physical and mental health conditions.

The assistance provided makes a difference to not only the veteran, but also to those who support them. RSL DefenceCare is able to assist in times of injury, illness and crisis and we work collaboratively with other service providers in a wide range of areas.

## **OPERATION K9 – ASSISTANCE DOGS FOR VETERANS**

Following a successful trial by RSL SA, RSL DefenceCare would like to trial four Assistance Dogs for veterans with PTSD in NSW. The program has had remarkable results in South Australia. One young veteran had not left his home in two years prior to being matched with an Assistance Dog. He is now able to go to cafes and leave his home – things that most of us take for granted but he was unable to do before receiving his dog.

This program is run and administered by the Royal Society for the Blind (RSB) and produces highly trained Assistance Dogs that perform tasks that are needed by each veteran.

If you would like to donate to this program, please call Jill Rocchi on (02) 8088 0388.

## **RSL DEFENCECARE IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

RSL WA and RSL DefenceCare are joining together to bring our services to veterans and their families living in Western Australia. The services will be fully funded by RSL WA and we anticipate will commence mid-year.

## **HOUSING COORDINATOR TO BE APPOINTED**

The Department of Family and Community Services has allocated \$1m to assist homeless veterans or those at risk of homelessness with rental subsidies to help them access the private rental market. The payment of subsidies and finding of appropriate housing will be coordinated by the Ryde office of Housing NSW. RSL DefenceCare (Wayne Watson) has been working closely with Geoff Evans and Housing NSW in the past few months on this.

As part of the \$1m, FACS has agreed

to fund a Housing Coordinator for veterans in RSL DefenceCare – this will be a new fully-funded position. FACS indicated that they prefer to deal with only one ex-service organisation rather than receive referrals from all ex-service organisations. We are yet to finalise the details, but we do know that the position will be responsible for coordinating all enquiries from ESOs, liaising with Housing NSW, training Housing NSW staff on veterans' issues and informing other ex-service organisations about the funding.

This result confirms RSL DefenceCare (and as a result RSL NSW) as the pre-eminent professional ex-service organisation helping veterans and their families in crisis in NSW.

## **CONTACT US**

RSL DefenceCare is a charity helping current and ex-serving members of the ADF and their families in times of injury, illness and crisis. RSL 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 RSL DefenceCare can assist you and your family, please contact us.

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