



Robyn Collins
General Manager



Calls to RSL DefenceCare continue to surge and the outdated telephone system remains an issue. We know this is the most frustrating aspect of our operations, and we are equally frustrated in our efforts to find a solution. We will transition to internet-based phone calls in a final effort to ease the problems.

In the meantime, our organisation continues to struggle under the weight of calls for assistance from Defence families in crisis. While we await our audited financial results for 2016, we know that if it wasn't for a December donation of \$800,000 by Maroubra RSL sub-Branch, our support for veterans would have been \$300,000 over budget in 2017.

The relentless need for help for veterans and their families remains a key issue – veteran welfare is part of the RSL's mission and RSL DefenceCare was formed in response to this need. Donations from sub-Branches and Women's Auxiliaries are around 20% lower than last year and early ANZAC Appeal figures are down on previous years.

The care of our veterans and their families is a shared responsibility – and we hope you will join us in helping Defence families with no one else to turn to when they are in crisis. Any donations you can make to help veterans and their families in need are appreciated.

Donations can be made online at rsldefencecare.org.au/donate or by direct deposit to our account Commonwealth Bank BSB: 062 016 Account no: 00050589 (If you require a tax-deductible receipt, please send an email

titled "Bank transfer donation" to info@rsldefencecare.org.au with your name and postal address).

NSW GOVERNMENT FUNDS HOUSING PROJECT OFFICER

RSL DefenceCare recently received funding from NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) to employ a Housing Project Officer to co-ordinate the many requests we receive to assist veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The new team member, David Willis, has an extensive background in housing services for some of the most vulnerable community members.

David provides housing and support advice, helping vulnerable and homeless ex-serving Defence personnel to access appropriate housing options. He also manages relationships, partnerships and networks between RSL DefenceCare, FACS and other service providers to facilitate access to services and help maintain tenancies. David currently handles enquires from veterans, sub-Branch Welfare Officers and other organisations working with veterans in need of housing assistance.

If you know any veteran in need of assistance with housing, please contact RSL DefenceCare on 02 8088 0388 or info@rsldefencecare.org.au.

PEOPLE WE HAVE HELPED

A former anti-aircraft gunner with no one left to turn to.

Neale is a 93-year-old WWII veteran who served in the Army 2/1 Artillery Medium Regiment. In 1940, at the age of 16, Neale was looking to follow his cousin Ken into the RAAF. Neale was too young and had his application rejected.



A few years later, Neale joined the Army, leaving behind a promising tennis career, shortly before Davis Cup trials.

Neale was posted eventually to Cowra barracks. While serving food in a mess hall to POWs, Neale was attacked and knocked unconscious. The injuries continued to affect him and he began having blackouts. As the war drew to a close Neale was offered, but rejected, medical discharge and saw out his time with the Army, concluding in 1946.

Adjusting to civilian life was difficult and Neale had to "feel [his] way all the time, it was not easy to get back into it". In 1948 Neale married Nell and they had two children. Neale continued to suffer blackouts and finally, in 1968, he sought treatment and was given medication. Sadly in 1981, Nell passed away. In 1985 Neale married Patricia, who helped him deal with his issues.

Over the years, Neale's medication was taken off the market and rather than replace it, he was gradually weaned off it. Unfortunately, his blackouts returned. Neale sought assistance in the form of a pension, but due to some ill-advised recommendations, his request was denied.

The years went on and Neale became progressively worse. Neale and Patricia were running out of options until the Welfare Officer at Canterbury-Hurlstone Park sub-Branch asked what assistance Neale was receiving. When they discovered it was nothing, they referred him to RSL DefenceCare.

We visited Neale in hospital whilst he suffered from pneumonia and an infection. We organised taxi vouchers



to assist Patricia to travel to and from the hospital to see Neale and to bring him home safely. They were also useful in taking him to medical appointments. Patricia said the help was “unbelievable” and she was so grateful.

RSL DefenceCare also worked on organising Neale’s pension, initially raising it from nothing to 100% and subsequently increasing it even further under an extreme disability adjustment to 155% of the general rate. Neale has been granted a Gold Card and the pension has been backdated to cover the time he should have received the extreme disability adjustment.

Neale and Patricia are now able to receive additional support services, allowing them to hire better medical assistance equipment. It has “made all the difference” according to Patricia.

“Everyone’s been so caring. I just want to say an enormous thank you, to the RSL DefenceCare team for all their help in achieving this outcome and taking the stress out of the process.”

QUALIFYING SERVICE & DVA BENEFITS

Having Qualifying Service determined and accepted by the DVA can provide you with a range of benefits including:

- Service Pension at age 60
- Commonwealth Seniors Healthcare Card (CSHC)
- The Veterans’ Pharmaceutical Reimbursement Scheme, which reimburses eligible veterans for out-of-pocket costs associated with the concessional pharmaceutical co-payment
- Automatic issue of a DVA Gold Card at the age of 70 (although Commonwealth or allied veterans are ineligible except where they were domiciled in Australia prior to enlistment)
- A DVA Health Card — Pharmaceuticals Only (Orange Card) for Commonwealth and allied WWII veterans
- Exemption of DVA Disability Pension

income from the calculation of aged care fees.

To be eligible for and receive these benefits you must complete the DVA Qualifying Service Form, using the online claims facility on the DVA website or through your DVA My Account. Alternatively, please contact RSL DefenceCare on 02 8088 0388 or info@rsldefencecare.org.au.

ANZAC APPEAL 2017

RSL DefenceCare thanks everyone who helped fundraise during the Anzac Appeal. We are grateful to all who supported veterans and their families through sub-Branches and RSL DefenceCare. Among our supporters was Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, who visited volunteers at Martin Place to make a donation.



We will confirm the total raised in the 2017 Appeal in the next issue.

One of the recommendations of our recent Operational Review of Appeals was the formation of an Advisory Committee comprising members of sub-Branches and Women’s Auxiliaries to help grow appeals and assist with issues. We would like a mix of representatives from city and country locations and are calling for interested members to nominate.

The Committee will meet two or three times a year and members will change each year. If you are interested in nominating, please discuss this with your local sub-Branch or Women’s Auxiliary and email your details to info@rsldefencecare.org.au. If we receive too many nominations, we will be in contact for representation in coming years.

We would also like to thank the ADF members who contributed their time to collect donations, particularly the crew of HMAS Success. Their help was invaluable and reminded us of the sacrifice they and their families make in serving and protecting this country.

Our thanks to the NRL for their continued support for the Appeal through the Anzac Round – the donations collected at these games make a real difference to veterans and their families.

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.

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

Instagram: DefenceCare