



Robyn Collins
General Manager



We live in a world where no one organisation can be all things to all people; but together we can do so much more.

The challenge for us all, as our involvement in Afghanistan has wound down significantly, is to come together to ensure that never again do we hear that a recently returned veteran has travelled on his own to a county he had never been to before and walked off into unforgiving wilderness to die alone.

This devastating event, which happened to an Australian soldier earlier this year, tells us there is so much more we can do and the more we work together, the better our chance of success.

In 2013, DefenceCare responded to 2651 calls for help from veterans and their families in need of help.

We provided 1385 services such as financial assistance, counselling and disaster relief; submitted 282 claims to the DVA; and completed 152 appeals at the Veterans' Review Board.

DefenceCare helped 1276 ex-serving members or their surviving spouse, 1042 current serving members and 71 family members such as parents and children.

I can't begin to describe the concern we feel when we get calls for help from younger veterans with significant physical and/or mental health issues that have contributed to relationship breakdowns and financial stress, with some close to bankruptcy.

We are currently working with clients who have been and in some cases still are close to suicide. We won't be able to tell their stories in newsletters such as these, as these veterans are unlikely to be able to share their story for some time, if ever. The increasing numbers worry us. If we could

afford to employ another counsellor, we would.

Whilst DefenceCare is able to help more veterans than many other ex-service organisations, we are sadly not yet as well known and don't receive as many donations and this will take time.

In 2014, raising money is our highest priority and we are looking for sub-Branches with financial resources and members who are interested in partnering with DefenceCare to fund services such as counselling, home cleaning for injured or ill veterans and their family or providing emergency assistance to buy food. Please call me if you are interested in talking more about how you can get involved in this option.

Thank you for continuing to donate to help veterans and their families in need.

WOMEN'S AUXILIARIES' LEST WE FORGET QUILT TO HELP VETERANS IN CRISIS

Please look out for tickets to the Lest We Forget Quilt that will be raffled in 2014 to support DefenceCare.

By the time this reaches you, tickets will be on sale. At \$2 a ticket and \$20 for a book of 10, it is a great way to support veterans in crisis. Please call Pauline James on 0416 247 635 to order tickets.

PEOPLE WE HAVE HELPED

...the daughter and widow of a World War II Veteran

Doreen "Peggy" Cruise met her husband Fred at Coogee when she was only 14. It was love at first sight.

"I was with my sister and we used to sit by the wall watching the boys. All the girls secretly liked Fred," said 98 year old Peggy. One day, Fred told Peggy and her sister that he had decided he wouldn't go out with girls anymore. Peggy was devastated. But when Peggy and her sister were leaving, Fred approached her,



looked her in the eyes knowingly, and said: "I changed my mind".

That was the start of a lifelong romance between Peggy and her rock Fred "Dar" Cruise. They were destined to be together always.

Fred Cruise volunteered for the army with his brother Jack and the story goes that the brothers in arms were required to re-enlist for service. The brothers got a bit tipsy, causing Fred to fill in the wrong form. The form was for joining the Royal Australian Air Force, which was where he ended up, fighting the Germans in WWII.

As Group Captain and then Flight Lieutenant, Fred flew Spitfires and Lancaster bombers. "Dad said one of the worst traps for pilots was electricity wires. Sometimes when they were coming to



land, planes were caught up in electricity wires causing injury and potential death,” said his daughter Patricia. In the last year of the war, Fred trained the allies to become pilots.

Peggy missed her husband dearly during the war. “I hated the war. I didn’t want the war. It was dreadful. Patricia didn’t have a father for all those years.”

When he returned home, Fred connected with RSL and eventually became Treasurer of Oatley sub-Branch.

Patricia always remembers her father fondly. “Dad was a lot of fun and loved kids. He always told fractured fairy tales – he turned it around to make out the good guy was the bad guy and the bad guy the good guy – he had a great sense of humour. He wasn’t a rich man in any way but he was kind to everybody.” Peggy’s rock and Patricia’s beloved father suffered a massive cardiac arrest in 1991 and passed away.

When Patricia found out the cemetery her father was buried in did not have any room next to his plot for her mother, she became concerned. “When my mother passes, they will not have any room for my mum Peggy. The family want them together. They had to be together. But I could not afford

the cost of unearthing and removing my father.”

DefenceCare arranged for the moving of Fred to a cemetery that was closer to Patricia and Peggy and had room for Peggy when she is laid to rest. Fred’s new home has a beautiful view – it is under the gumtrees and next to a gazebo. To commemorate his service, DefenceCare also arranged for a new plaque bearing the Australian Army and RAAF symbols.

“I encourage donations to DefenceCare to help people like us – where there is a defence family member who is ill, injured or in crisis. People like my dad were prepared to lay down their lives for Australians for a better life. There is no greater sacrifice that anyone can make than that. In their hour of need, should not we support them? Lest We Forget.”

Sadly since this story was written, Peggy has passed away. Her ashes have been laid to rest next to her dear husband Fred.

...a young veteran’s wife in hospital

A veteran’s wife unexpectedly became seriously ill and was hospitalised. Trying

to juggle work, looking after children and supporting his wife put a lot of stress on the veteran. Their finances, already under strain, became a serious worry. DefenceCare arranged for a financial counsellor to help with their finances and also paid for child minding and other services to take some pressure off him during such a difficult time.

...a number of young veterans with mental health conditions

DefenceCare’s counsellor is working with several young veterans suffering severe mental illnesses – some PTSD, some depression, some anxiety. Their relationships have broken down or are severely strained and the veteran’s financial situation is dire – some to the point of possible bankruptcy. Some of our young veterans are homeless. As we work with veterans, we try to ease the pressure of financial worries and connect them with support. In one case a veteran on the verge of suicide is on his way to hospital to receive the help he needs.

A GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING

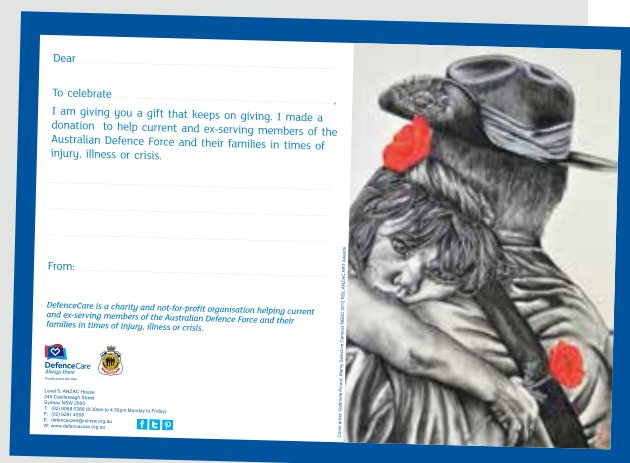
Are you celebrating someone’s birthday, wedding or other special occasion?

Why not make a donation to help veterans and their families instead of buying them a gift? Simply make a donation online and print out a DefenceCare donation gift card, fill it in and give it to your friend or loved one.

Alternatively, you can send a cheque made out to RSL Welfare and Benevolent Institution to DefenceCare, Level 5 ANZAC House, 245 Castlereagh St, Sydney NSW 2000 and let us know it is instead of a gift for

someone. We will mail you a donation gift certificate for you to fill in and give as a gift.

If you want more information, please call Kiestyn Austin on 9264 8188 extension 500.



RSL NSW STATE CONGRESS

DefenceCare will be running a Health and Well-Being Seminar on Monday May 26 from 9am to 12noon at the RSL NSW State Congress in Coffs Harbour. We will also have an information stall at Coffs Harbour Ex-Services Memorial & Sporting Club during Congress – May 26 to 28, 9am to 3pm.

If you are not attending Congress but would like to attend our Health and Well-Being Seminar, please call Kiestyn Austin on 9264 8188 extension 500. Please also feel free to come into the club and visit our stall during Congress – you do not have to be attending Congress to visit our stall.

This year we are also putting together a morning bus tour for partners during Congress. More details will be available through sub-Branched in March. If you would like to register your interest in this morning bus tour, please call Kiestyn Austin as above.

LOW INCOME HEALTH CARE CARD

If you do not have a White or Gold Card from Veterans' Affairs and are struggling financially, check out the Low Income Health Care Card. This card gives low income earners access to cheaper prescription medicines, and various concessions from government and private organisations. There is an income test.

You can find out more about the card at www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/low-income-health-care-card or contact Centrelink.

OUT AND ABOUT IN EARLY 2014

DefenceCare and RSL NSW said goodbye to HMAS *Darwin* on January 19 as they set off on a seven month deployment to the Middle East. We joined together to provide food, refreshments and postcards to colour



for the children so they could post them to their mum or dad while they were overseas.

In early February, we also attended two family days for Defence families at Holsworthy and Randwick Barracks, providing information and confidential support for families of current serving members.

DO YOU WANT TO HELP?

Donations are always welcome from individuals as well as sub-Branched and Women's Auxiliaries. You can donate to DefenceCare both now or, if you would prefer, in your will. If you are still working, we welcome donations from workplace fundraisers and these are especially meaningful just before ANZAC Day.

Please also consider telling your friends about DefenceCare and let them know you are a supporter. If you would like DefenceCare brochures to hand out to your colleagues or friends, please call us on 8088 0388.

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