



**Robyn Collins**  
General Manager



DefenceCare received a surge for calls for assistance in March – with total enquiries up 25% on February. Calls may have been influenced by media attention focussed on PTSD, although in previous years, March has also been very busy.

- In March:
- DefenceCare received 450 calls for help;
  - Of the calls for assistance, 181 were for help with DVA Entitlements and claims; 31 were calls about appeals to the VRB; 73 were calls for counselling, financial help and other community support; and 165 were for a number of other matters and assistance;
  - A total of 163 new claims were submitted to the DVA and 56 claims were finalised; and
  - Community support active clients totalled 345.

RSL Welfare and Benevolent Institution’s 2014 Accounts have now been audited and although the loss of \$467,663 is an improvement on previous years’ results, it is an indication that the demand for our services is still outstripping the level of donations.

We remain committed to helping Defence family members in crisis for as long as we can – it is our hope that during 2015, our donations increase so we can be assured that no one in need is turned away.

**PEOPLE WE HAVE HELPED**

**...An Air Force veteran and his family**  
Adrian was in the Air Force for 22

years, becoming an Airframe Fitter after a recruiter came to his high school.

Transitioning back to civilian life was difficult and he was unaware of many of the civilian ways of life that others take for granted.

The biggest adjustment was the feeling like he’d been cut off from the herd. Having been deployed away with the same group a lot, they got to know each other very well. They ate, worked, travelled, drank, bunked and lived together for weeks at a time. Suddenly there was none of this and while his civilian co-workers were nice, it wasn’t the same.

“After discharging I began work and three years later I needed my right hip replaced three times with five major operations, all due to a service related injury.

“DefenceCare helped my wife get through the DVA process so that our home was ready for me. While recuperating I was also made redundant. I had a mortgage, a car loan, a wife, two kids and a dog to support and no money.

“In the meantime, my daughter was offered a place in a primary special Opportunity Class offered by the state government for bright students. We were so excited that she did so well with her studies. The down side was she needed to change schools and needed a new uniform and an iPad.

“DefenceCare assisted us to get her the iPad she needed as well as most of her school uniform. This gave her a fair start with the other kids and she’s doing very well in this class too. I have no doubt whatsoever that she will be able



to go on and do great things with her education.

“DefenceCare helped us out at probably the lowest point in our lives to save our daughter’s chance at top level schooling. When you have no prospects for a job and a mountain of bills piling up, watching a chance like this slip through your fingers gives you a sick feeling. That was lifted off us and we are so grateful for that.”

**...An injured naval veteran**



Derek was born in Scotland but enlisted in the Navy soon after becoming an Australian citizen. He loved his time in the Navy and would do it all again – the most difficult thing was leaving behind his wife of 23 years. Prior to enlisting, they had only ever been apart for a week.

Initially joining as a reserve diver, Derek enjoyed the Navy life so much that he joined full-time shortly after. Following the advice of his divisional officer at recruit school, he joined full time as a Combat Systems Operator (Mine Warfare).

During his time in the Navy, Derek visited the Solomon Islands to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the battle of Guadalcanal and in particular, the memorial service on the 9 August 2012 for HMAS *Canberra*. He was serving on HMAS *Gascoyne* when, together with HMAS *Huon*, the ship positioned itself over the final resting

place of HMAS *Canberra* (I), laid wreaths and remembered the 84 men who lost their lives during the Battle of Savo Island.

Derek was medically discharged from the Navy after seven years as a result of back and knee injuries.

He has had four knee operations on both knees and now requires back surgery. At the time of discharge, he felt he had let his work mates down due to injury - like he was always breaking himself and this led to a feeling of uselessness.

Derek struggles daily adjusting to civilian life. He misses being part of the Navy and was incredibly proud to be a part of it. He is now studying Psychology and Counselling and hopes to work in child protection.

“Without DefenceCare I would not have any accepted conditions from DVA.

“I recently found out I suffer from Graves Disease, which can make my memory bad and I get frustrated with myself. My advocate has the patience of a saint allowing for my mood or memory. Thanks to this help, I can now get the treatment I need without the worry of how I am going to pay for it.

“I would say without DefenceCare, I would be lost in an unfamiliar world

of bureaucracy and red tape. I doubt I would have any of my conditions recognised and accepted. Thank you, DefenceCare. I am in your debt.”

**SECURITY – ID THEFT**

ID Care is a non-profit organisation that helps provide support services to help victims of identity theft in Australia and NZ. The contact number for Australia 1300 432 273 and their website [www.idcare.org](http://www.idcare.org)

**RESOURCE ON VETERANS’ HEALTH ISSUES AND MEDICATIONS**

The Department of Veterans’ Affairs has developed the Veterans’ Medicines Advice and Therapeutics Education Services (Veterans’ MATES) project with the aim of improving the use of medicines and related health services in the veteran community. The project has a number of resources on its website [www.veteransmates.net.au](http://www.veteransmates.net.au) including fact sheets on talking about mental health fitness, chronic musculoskeletal pain and dementia.

**2015 RSL NSW CONGRESS PARTNERS’ TOUR**

DefenceCare will be running a Health and Well-Being Seminar on Monday

May 25 from 9am to 12 noon 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 - Monday to Wednesday, 8.30am to 3pm.

Our RSL NSW State Congress Partners’ Tour will combine a guided bus tour of Coffs Harbour and Sawtell, morning tea and lunch. It will be on Tuesday May 26, 8.30am to 3.30pm. Information on the tour has been sent to all sub-Branches. **Cost:** \$50 per person. Bookings and payment: Call Coffs Coast Visitors Information Centre on 1300 369 070 or email [tourism@coffscoast.com.au](mailto:tourism@coffscoast.com.au). Please ask for the RSL Congress Tour Reservations. Please book early, numbers are limited. More information and questions: 1300 369 070.

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