



Robyn Collins
General Manager



A changeover in our database mid-2016 has slowed our ability to provide statistics for 2016, but we can share the following information.

In 2016 RSL DefenceCare:

- Responded to 6,016 calls for help, an increase of 27% on the 4737 calls received in 2015;
- Provided \$511,222 in direct financial assistance to veterans and their families compared with \$617,448 in 2015;
- Lodged 1445 DVA claims (615 MRCA, 228 SRCA, 516 VEA) compared with 1062 (737 MRCA, 121 SRCA, 204 VEA) in 2015;
- Completed 149 appeals (including ADR matters) at the Veterans' Review Board compared with 177 in 2015.

In the first two months of 2017, financial assistance has increased to approximately \$50,000 per month, the level we saw in 2015. Although we can't predict when and how many requests for help will come in every month, we monitor the level to ensure we have sufficient funds to help as many people as possible.

In terms of who we can assist, I'd like to clarify that financial assistance is only available to veterans or their close family members. If a Women's Auxiliary member is not a veteran or close family member we can't assist financially. We can, however, refer anyone who calls to another organisation that may be able to assist. I am sorry if there was confusion after the previous issue.

For RSL DefenceCare, 2017 has

already seen some changes.

I mentioned in the last issue that our organisation will be gradually transitioning to a new charity that will be incorporated and called RSL DefenceCare Limited. The new structure will ensure we keep up-to-date with the needs of our Defence family members. We anticipate that the transition will occur in mid-2017 and I will keep you up to date with developments.

In the meantime, we remain a trust and charity called RSL Welfare and Benevolent Institution (trading as RSL DefenceCare). We are a separate legal entity from RSL NSW and RSL LifeCare and provide claims and advocacy services, financial assistance, counselling and referrals to other organisations. We do not have any members and are a small team of professionals to help and support current and ex-serving ADF members and their families in times of injury, illness and crisis.

In late March the National Mental Health Commission released its findings on Suicide and Self Harm Prevention Services available to current and former ADF members and their families.

The full report and findings are available at www.dva.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/publications/health/Final_Report.pdf.

Some of the findings include:

- the need for closer and more effective engagement with families to identify and respond to the challenges of supporting members and in maintaining their own well-being;
- the need for the ADF and DVA to work collaboratively to ensure the processes are continuous and seamless for members; and
- higher levels of suicide among ex-serving ADF members under the age of 30 when

compared with the general population.

In coming months we will also see the findings of the Senate Enquiry into Veteran Suicide – with the research helping organisations better support and understand the difficulties faced by many veterans and their families.



PEOPLE WE HAVE HELPED

A former infantry soldier struggling to adjust to civilian life...

Neville was an infantry soldier who served multiple tours of duty in Timor between 1998 and 2005, helping to maintain Australia's peacekeeping operations. Like many Australians, Neville joined the army to continue the legacy of a family of Defence Force members and proudly defend our country. During his second tour of duty in Timor, Neville left behind his fiancée and dogs.

Like many veterans, Neville returned home unsure of how to once again settle into civilian life. His struggle with this change took him to some very dark places and ultimately led to him separating from his long term partner. Facing all of these challenges alone, Neville found things unbearable.

RSL DefenceCare helped Neville to adjust to his new life by assisting with emotional support, as well as financial support. Neville's case worker, Gary, was able to help him get his living situation under control during a very traumatic time. Gary organised applications for housing and successfully placed Neville in his new home. He also organised payment for bond, rent and furniture at a time when dealing with vendors and real estate agents was something Neville did not want to handle. This support

was hugely beneficial for Neville as he worked through his issues. As Neville said, “the assistance provided by Gary meant I was able to focus on myself and my recovery during a very stressful time. Gary, my case worker, was central to my coming through a challenging part of my life and I won’t ever forget that.”

MEET OUR ANZAC APPEAL VOLUNTEERS

Maria: I have been the Treasurer of Ingleburn RSL Women’s Auxiliary for the last four years.

How many years have you been volunteering for the ANZAC Appeal? I have been a member for eight years and have volunteered that whole time.

Is there a reason as to why you support this cause? I enjoy the challenge. Being the wife of a 23-year veteran who had service in Vietnam, the cause is close to my heart. When you live with the aftermath of all that entails I, like many other wives of ex-servicemen, feel that we are helping to support the welfare of not only our husbands, but of all veterans.

We often get asked, why is it the same people who put their hand up all the time? My answer is, if not us, then who? We are carrying on the tradition of all those who have gone before us and try to encourage the younger ones coming through. It is satisfying, although sometimes very trying when you try to get people to part with their money.

I get a good deal of satisfaction seeing people wearing an ANZAC Badge, and an even better feeling if I have sold it to them.

Barbara: I am President of Ingleburn RSL Women’s Auxiliary.

How many years have you been volunteering for the ANZAC Appeal?

Five years. We do the same for Remembrance Day. I am the proud 48-year wife of a 20-year Vietnam Navy veteran, and all our service personnel, especially ones who have been deployed overseas, need all the support we can give them.

How do you feel on ANZAC Day when you see someone wearing an ANZAC Appeal badge? Thankful for their donation and glad they are proud to wear it.

NON-LIABILITY HEALTH CARE

Non-liability health care is one of the best recent initiatives to help veterans. All those who have served in the ADF permanent forces are now eligible for health care for a range of mental health conditions without needing to prove that the condition has arisen from or is linked to their service.

Reservists are also eligible if they have any period of continuous full-time service.

The conditions covered under non-liability health care are PTSD, Depressive

disorder, Anxiety disorder, alcohol use disorder and substance use disorder.

It is easy to apply and applications can be made by phone or email and a diagnosis is no longer required prior to being approved for treatment. For more information phone DVA 133 254 (metro callers) or 1800 555 254 (regional) or email NLHC@dva.gov.au. You can also visit <https://www.dva.gov.au/factsheet-hsv109-non-liability-health-care>. Feel free to also call RSL DefenceCare on 02 8088 0388.

ANZAC APPEAL 2017

By the time you read this the ANZAC Appeal will be over and we thank all who participated, raising valuable funds to help veterans and their families through sub-Branched and RSL DefenceCare. The ANZAC Appeal is an important fundraiser and gives the community a chance to understand and support those who have sacrificed so much for our country.

We’d like to introduce our Fundraising



team of Cristina Caamano, Elizabeth Smith and Matthew Cullen. Elizabeth has been with us since late 2016, with Cristina, our Appeals Development Officer and Matthew joining us in March this year.

All our Fundraising team members have a service connection - Cristina's brother served with the U.S. Forces twice in Afghanistan, Elizabeth is an Army Reservist with deployment history and Matthew's grandparents served in WWII.

Cristina's role will be to both run and grow the ANZAC and Poppy Appeals; while Elizabeth and Matthew will assist by engaging with volunteers and managing stock movement.

Part of Cristina's role will be contacting and visiting sub-Branches, listening to your feedback and ideas whilst helping you achieve your fundraising goals. Cristina will join the RSL DefenceCare team at Congress, so please come up and

say hello if you are there.

Kookaburra Kids camps and activities for Defence children

Thanks to Federal Government funding, Kookaburra Kids is now offering free recreational, educational camps and other activities for children from Defence families who are living in families

affected by mental illness. The camps and activities give kids a break in a fun, positive, supported and safe environment.

Anyone can refer a child to the program.

More information: www.kookaburrakids.org.au; info@kookaburrakids.org.au or 02 9531 1571.

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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