



30 March 2009

In reply please quote:

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Progress on MOU

I am writing to you regarding the process to date on the VANZ elements of the MOU. As the implementation of the MOU forms one part of VANZ overall work programme, it is my intention to write to you quarterly outlining the progress on these issues.

Registration

The Vietnam veterans register was established at the commencement of the implementation of the MOU. It has been operating since that time and will continue to operate as a living document. As VANZ receives additional details location and status are updated.

To date we have a total of 5857 registrations.

- Of the 2447 Vietnam veterans we have contacted with registration forms 1402 have registered.
- Deceased veterans 135
- Spouse/partner registrations 1141 (including 47 deceased spouses/partners)
- Child registrations 1608 (including 37 deceased children)
- Grandchild registrations 1571 (including 8 deceased grandchildren)

All the unregistered veterans have been contacted on a number of occasions. Those who are not registered have declined to register. As registration is not compulsory we can not do anything to make people register.

Any Vietnam veterans who come to VANZ notice are sent registration information.

We are currently in the process of scanning all the registration forms and rationalising the register. There are some people that have registered multiple times. During this process we are removing those duplications.

Ex-Gratia Payments

As claims are made they are processed based on the medical evidence that is provided. To date 78 payments to a total value of \$2.775 million have been made. It was estimated that 39 payments would be made.

Payments have been made to 47 veterans

- 10 Chronic Lymphocytic Leukaemia (CLL)
- 1 Hodgkins Disease
- 8 Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma
- 4 Soft-tissue Sarcoma
- 24 Chloracne

Payments have been made to seven Surviving Spouse/Partners

- 3 Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma
- 2 Soft-tissue Sarcoma
- 1 Chronic Lymphocytic Leukaemia (CLL)
- 1 Hodgkins Disease

Payments have been made to 19 children

- 2 Acute Myeloid Leukaemia
- 8 Cleft Palate
- 6 Spina Bifida
- 3 Cleft Palate/Cleft Lip

Payments have been made to the families of five deceased children.

Medical Assessments

The Vietnam veterans' medical assessments are underway. Every veteran who is registered has been sent information on the medical assessment and a medical assessment form. To date 720 veterans have had their medical and returned it to VANZ.

Where the medicals have identified service related, or potential service related conditions, a War Disablement Pension claim for the condition has been facilitated.

Expert Panel

The Minister has submitted the appointments to the Cabinet appointments committee. Once Cabinet approval is received the Minister will appoint the individual members.

Once appointed the expert panel will be known as the Expert Panel on Veterans Health and will become an independent body providing advice to the Minister.

Grant of 160% WDP for Terminally Ill Veterans

This was implemented in 2008 and is being applied. Where a veteran's accepted service related disability leads to the veteran having less than 12 months to live a 160% War Disablement Pension is awarded.

Programme for Children of Vietnam Veterans

VANZ is currently finalising a review of the programmes provided to the children and grandchildren of Vietnam veterans by other administrations. Once this is completed we will provide advice to the Minister on possible options and the costs.

Ongoing Research

The intention is to link this to the Expert Panel on Veterans Health and the War Pensions Medical Trust Fund so that any research that is undertaken is independent.

The War Pensions Medical Trust Fund is currently considering the feasibility of undertaking a study into New Zealand Vietnam veterans' mortality.

Provision of Information to Clinicians

One of the roles of the Expert Panel on Veterans Health will be to provide advice on the application of the research to the New Zealand context. The research considered by the expert panel, and their views on that research, will form the basis of the information made available to clinicians.

Establishment of Centres of Excellence in the Veteran's Homes

Initial discussions have taken place and the decision was made to develop the concept of a virtual centre of excellence that makes information generated on veterans' health care by the veterans' homes available to other providers.

Additional work has been done to develop this, but given the current funding constraints we need to provide discuss the way ahead with the Minister.

Veterans' Card

A Veteran's version of the SuperGold card was issued in 2007.

A replacement for the current veterans' war pensions' medical treatment card has been agreed and will be launched in April.

The long term intent is to chip the veterans' war pensions' medical treatment card so that it contains information on a veteran's service and service related disabilities. The current difficulty is that not all medical professionals have access to technology to read chipped cards.

Children's Card

The work on the Vietnam Veteran's Children's Card has reached a point where we need some consensus on the purpose of the card.

One suggestion has been that the card be linked to the war pensions system. The war pension's process does not include children. The additional funding for the children of Vietnam veterans with spina bifida, cleft lip, cleft palate, acute myeloid leukaemia and adrenal gland cancer is managed through VANZ case management, as is the funding for access to counselling.

There are two options for the card that appear to be the most feasible. The first would be to give the card to the children who are being case managed with the services that VANZ will fund outlined on the card.

The second is to give the card to all the children who have registered as an acknowledgement that they are the children of Vietnam veterans and to put information about the five accepted conditions, as well details of the counselling available through VANZ on the card.

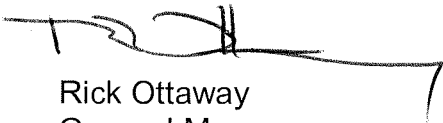
I would appreciate it if you could let me know how you want to progress this.

Review of Veterans' Affairs New Zealand

The independent machinery of government review of VANZ was undertaken by the State Services Commission in 2007. This was confirmed by Cabinet in 2008. The operational structure integrating the war pensions processing unit of MSD into VANZ is nearing completion.

As the war pensions legislation forms the base for the operation of VANZ, a further review of the operational structure of VANZ will be undertaken once the shape of the new war pensions legislation is known.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rick Ottaway', written over a horizontal line.

Rick Ottaway
General Manager