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Dr Kathleen Dermody
Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
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Dear Dr Dermody

Thank for the opportunity for the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) to provide input to your Committee's inquiry into Australia's involvement in peace operations. You asked six Questions on Notice and I have provided responses below.

Question 1: DVA personnel's understanding of peace operations

The Department has not undertaken any agency-wide survey of its staff's experience with or knowledge of the operations of the Australian Defence Force.

The outcomes of a recent DVA Satisfaction Survey of Under 45s clients highlighted the need for DVA, as part of an improved service delivery process, to improve staff knowledge of the Defence Structure and also the impact of the military lifestyle. In response to the results of the survey, DVA formed a Task Force to provide recommendations on service delivery and other options to address the issues identified in the survey. One of the key responses recommended by the Task Force was to increase staff awareness of, and empathy with, issues impacting on younger veterans.

The National Younger Veterans Consultative Forum was convened by the Department in recognition that the younger veteran group has special needs which are significantly different from that of the larger veteran community whose average age is over 80 years. The Forum evolved from the Younger Veterans Program Advisory Committee, and acknowledges the view that it was considered that appropriate longer-term policy development and outcomes were more likely to be achieved through regular consultation and discussion between representative groups. The Australian Peacekeeper & Peacemaker Veterans' Association Inc is a member organisation of the Forum.

For the purposes of the Forum, a younger veteran is any member or former member of the ADF who has any service from the Vietnam War on, with eligibility under any schemes administered by the Repatriation Commission or the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission.

The role of the Forum is to:

- provide a mechanism for regular consultation and discussion about issues affecting the younger veteran group and their families;
- assist the Repatriation Commission and the Department of Veterans' Affairs to identify issues which require consideration and issues of highest priority;
- provide a mechanism to disseminate information about departmental initiatives and other issues impacting the younger veteran group and their families;
- monitor and advise on the progress of studies affecting younger veterans through formal reporting on these studies at forum meetings; and
- monitor and advise on the progress of initiatives through a defined reporting system at forum meetings.

Question 2: Health study regarding peace operations

Peacekeeper studies are already being conducted. The Centre for Military and Veterans Health (CMVH) is undertaking longitudinal health surveillance on ADF deployed personnel, including peacekeepers. Health effect of specific deployments currently being investigated include the Solomons, Bougainville and East Timor. In addition the DVA, through its applied research program, is funding smaller studies of other peacekeeper deployments.

Question 3: Peacekeeping display at the Australian War Memorial

The Department of Veterans' Affairs had no input to the War Memorial's Peacekeeping Exhibition.

[Matter to be referred to the Australian War Memorial]

Question 4: Medical records

Advice from the Department of Defence is that some deployed health facilities provided by a number of countries (eg. US Aid Post in Camp Victory Iraq) do not hold a record of any treatment given to members of other nations' forces. Any documentation generated is given to the individual and it is then the individual's responsibility to ensure that it is put into his or her medical record.

Until recently, ADF members did not deploy on operations with their Unit Medical Record (UMR), so there was a reasonable likelihood that some record of treatment would not be reflected in their UMR. This would especially be the case if the treatment was provided early in the deployment, with the record often being retained by members on their person for considerable periods of time.

Whether to deploy with the UMR is now decided on a case by case basis (eg. ADF members now deploy with the UMR to the Middle East Area of Operations). Special Operations Command is currently developing an *Operational Health Record* in the form of a small booklet in a plastic wallet which could be issued to the individual. Key information would be transposed from the UMR, with details of all treatment provided in the Area of Operations being recorded in the booklet. The booklet would then be placed on the UMR on return from the operation and would form part of the permanent record.

Question 5 Clarification regarding the Anzac Parade memorial

The Government announced a commitment during the 2004 election campaign of \$200,000 towards the construction of a memorial in Canberra for Australian peacekeepers. The grant was paid to the memorial committee in June 2006.

A committee of stakeholders was established to oversee the design, construction and dedication of this memorial. The Australian Peacekeeping Memorial Committee, chaired by MAJGEN Tim Ford AM, has representatives from former and present members of the Australian Defence Force and Australian Federal Police officers who served in peacekeeping operations.

Lieutenant General John Sanderson AC, Australian Federal Police Commissioner Bill Keelty, and journalist Ms Geraldine Doogue agreed to be patrons of the memorial project.

A site on Anzac Parade, Canberra has been allocated for the memorial by the National Capital Authority and the Canberra National Memorials Committee has given the project its approval. A design competition will shortly be announced for a memorial of appropriate design and scale that appropriately reflects the service and sacrifice of the men and women who have served Australia in peace operations.

Staff from the DVA Commemorations Group have attended meetings of the memorial committee and have provided advice as required. DVA held off involvement until proper governance arrangements were in place. These have now been implemented. All aspects of the project remain the responsibility of the Committee.

Question 6: Recognition of peacekeepers

Staff undertaking the Official History of Peacekeeping at the Memorial have an up-to-date table listing the names of all Australian peacekeepers who have died on operations, including dates and details on the cause of death.

[Matter to be referred to the Australian War Memorial]

I trust information that this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely,

(Original Signed)
Mark Johnson
National Manager
Compensation Policy

17 August 2007