



VIETNAM VETERANS' FEDERATION

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Incorporating

Vietnam Veterans Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Association NSW Branch

Vietnam Veterans Federation Queensland Branch

Vietnam Veterans Federation ACT Branch

Vietnam Veterans Federation Victorian Branch

Vietnam Veterans Federation South Australian Branch

Vietnam Peacekeepers Peacemakers Federation of Tasmania

Vietnam Veterans, Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Federation of Australia WA
Branch

24 May 2015

Third Submission

Submission to the Senate Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade References Committee

Inquiry into the mental health of Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel who have returned from combat, peacekeeping or other deployment.

Misleading Statements about the Incidence of Veteran Suicide and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Recent statistics

Suicide

A new study (attached) shows that, despite the 'healthy soldier effect', the rate of Vietnam veterans' 'suicidality' is higher than their peers in the general population; quite a bit higher. (note 'suicidality' has three categories – thinking about it, planning it and attempting it).

The study is of particular interest to us because we have always been concerned with the effect of psychologically damaged veterans on their families. A previous study shows a heightened suicide rate amongst Vietnam veterans' children¹. This study shows a heightened 'suicidality' amongst the wives.

Also of interest to us (because it is currently not officially embraced) is the link shown in this study between PTSD and 'suicidality' in Vietnam veterans and their wives.

Of course, the study importantly predicts the fate of younger veterans and their families without quick and effective intervention.

The study results show, for instance, the need for a veteran's spouses to quickly seek help and intervention from the Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service should the veteran show

¹ Male Vietnam Veterans Survey and Community Comparison Outcomes (Department of Veteran's Affairs (DVA) Validation Study 1999,

'Suicides are three times more prevalent in veteran's children than the Australian community standard.'

disturbing post war behaviours. But young mums have a problem. What to do with their young children during counselling. Sadly the Repatriation Commission refuses to consider providing child care in the few instances family or neighbours can't help out. A full discussion is attached.

Respect for the families of war affected veterans is also important. Yet a compensation education scheme for the children of our worst affected veterans (VCES) was allowed to disintegrate, causing many families to have to abandon the scheme and seek help at Centrelink. Showing such disregard for the families of badly disabled veterans cannot help their health. The full story is attached.

Graham Walker
National Research Officer
Vietnam Veterans Federation

For Bill Roberts OAM, Acting National President