

I wish to contribute my personal experiences to your committee for consideration in your recommendations. I served for 20 years in the RAN serving in destroyers ,frigates aircraft carriers and submarines; including overseas service in all cases.I had 8 years in surface vessels & 12 years in submarines (5 years in RN O class boats which included service in UK, Scandanavia, Europe and the Mediterranean ) Service in surface ships included FESR 1959, Borneo, PNG, Solomon Islands, and the Pacific. During this time I was involved and subjected to many 'incidents', 'near misses', accidents, and 'dramatic' events including 2 personal bashing by gangs or groups along with the usual effects and outcomes of workplace issues in 1950s vintage warships in tropics and service in RAN /RN O class submarines.

I left the Navy in 1977 in a 'poor' mental state, but determined to continue to 'keep it under control' 'not be found out or exposed for the weakie I considered myself'. This is the 'norm' among defence personnel generally. While my service & family life could and was considered to be 'successful', there were several points when it got too much and I lost control- service wise resulting in cells, a court martial, loss of good conduct badges, reduction in earnings and stress, while on the home front enormous stress on my family, which if not for my wife and kids' love and commitment could have ended much differently.

My return to civilian employment in 1977 was also 'spiced' with more frequently occurring bouts of 'fog' eventually resulting in a diagnosis of depression and PTSD, eventually resulting in my being unable to work at all at age 61 for being 'found out' . Under an ESO officers advice and guidance I made a claim to DVA for acceptance of a service related disability which lasted 10 years to finalise, unfortunately my representations coincided with a period when I was in my deepest 'fog' during which I found it difficult if not impossible to recall and retell events accurately, events that had occurred sometimes 40 years since.

I know this is 'hindsight' now, but I am not alone. This sort of thing has happened and is happening to hundreds if not thousands of other 'diggers' some still serving. I am a member of a number of ESOs and have made contact with many who have and are suffering. We are a somewhat unique group (Timothy' submission is but one) who have not been in an actual 'firefight' or 'hand to hand punch-up like Korean, Vietnam or Middle East Vets and so tend to consider ourselves to be thought weakies, whingers, unjustified etc if we were 'found out'. Your important survey needs to be aware of this terrible predicament and identify ways and means for us to be 'found out' painlessly and without 'penalty'. Good luck and best wishes.

In writing this my intention is to simply add my experiences (which overall are very common) to the pot of information the committee has for information and consideration. I am hoping that any fellow vets will be encouraged to speak out about their experiences and to seek help from some quarter if they haven't already. Further, I hope the outcome of this inquiry will in some way contribute to the dismantling of the barriers and pressures , real or imagined, felt now and surely also confronting Vets in the future.

Dennis and Sandra Lee