Question 1

Outcome: Outputs 1.1 & 1.2
Topic: Costing information
(Written Question on Notice)

Senator HURLEY asked:

Could the Department please provide any costing information or documents relating to costing information that they have on:

1. Indexing the whole of the Special Rate Disability Pension to either movements in MTAWE or CPI.
2. Indexing the whole of the Intermediate Rate Disability Pension to either movements in MTAWE or CPI.
3. Indexing the whole of the Extreme Disablement Adjustment Rate to either movements in MTAWE or CPI.
4. The granting on non-warlike hazardous service to ADF participants in the British Nuclear Tests conducted in Australia
5. The granting of warlike service to British Commonwealth Occupation Force members
6. The provision of war widows pension to widows under 58 without dependents (being clarified with the Secretariat)
7. The provision of a $25,000 compensation payment to Australians who were prisoners of war in Europe or their surviving widows
8. Raising the Pharmaceutical allowance to match the co-payments
9. Lowering the Pharmaceutical co-payment for Veterans to match the current allowance
10. Raising the funeral allowance paid under the VEA into line with that paid under the MRCA
11. Reclassifying the service of the Army Training Support Team East Timor to warlike
12. Providing the Gold Card to disabled dependents of deceased veterans with warlike and non-warlike service
13. Indexing all elements of War Widows' Pension
14. Extending ISS to War Widows living overseas
15. Continuing full payment of the VCES to full time students over aged of 16
16. Providing the Gold Card to all Australian World War 2 veterans without qualifying service

I also note that the Departmental Secretary offered help in relation to costings relating to the Clarke Review or other issues provided they are specific and I intend to take him up on his offer.

Answer:

The practice of successive governments has been not to authorise the expenditure of time and money involved in assembling such information on a general basis.

Question 3

Outcome: Outputs 1.2
Topic: Indexation of Special Rate Disability Pension
(Written Question on Notice)

Senator HURLEY asked:
In 1997, the government re-indexed many of its pensions so as to respond to increases in the cost of living (CPI) but not to fall below a certain percentage of the average wage (MTAWE). What percentage of the average wage (MTAWE) did the TPI (Special Rate) pension represent?

What percentage of MTAWE does the TPI (Special Rate) pension currently represent?

If the TPI (Special Rate) pension had retained its 1997 value in relation to MTAWE, what would be its present value?

In 2004, part of the TPI (Special Rate) pension was re-indexed. If the whole of it had been re-indexed rather than just part of it, what would its value be now?

Answer:

- The Special Rate disability pension as a percentage of after-tax MTAWE in March 1997 was 60.5.

- The Special Rate disability pension as a percentage of after-tax MTAWE in March 2007 was 55.5. With the $50 per fortnight increase from 1 July 2007, the Special Rate disability pension, as a percentage of after-tax MTAWE (using the February 2007 MTAWE and the 2007-08 tax rates) would be about 57 percent.

It should be noted that in addition to the Special Rate pension approximately 80 per cent of veterans receive income support up to $525.10 per fortnight. Comparing Special Rate plus Service Pension with after-tax MTAWE, the figures in 1997 and 2007 are 93.5 percent and 89 per cent respectively.

- If the March 1997 percentage had continued the current special rate would be approximately $948.33 per fortnight.

- If the whole of Special Rate pension had been indexed in the same manner as Service Pension since March 2004, the current rate would be approximately $884.40 per fortnight.

Question 4

Outcome: Outputs 1.2
Topic: Claims Arising from Operation Catalyst, Falconer and Bastille
(Written Question on Notice)

Senator HURLEY asked:
In relation to the service personnel deployed under Operation Catalyst, Falconer and Bastille – for the whole period of those operations and in respect of service under this operation:

- How many claims for disability pension have been received by the Department?
- What has been the nature of those claims?
- How many of those claims have been related to mental heath issues?
- How many of those claims have been accepted?
- Do these accepted claims become part of the official casualty list for these operations?
    - If no why not?
    - If yes what is the casualty list?
- What has been the cost so far of these claims?
- What is the estimated cost to the Government for the future care of those veterans who have had claims accepted?
- Given that the RSL has estimated that claims for disability pension could rise sharply for personnel involved in the conflict does the Department have any estimates in regards to numbers of future claims?
- Other than claims for the disability pension what other claims have been received by those that have served in these operations?
- What was the nature of these claims and how many of them have there been?
- What has been the cost so far of these claims?

Answer:
As the Department of Veterans' Affairs does not catalogue service personnel deployments at the Operation level for the purpose of determining disability pension claims, it is not possible to provide the details relating to number of claims, the cost of such claims or to estimate the cost for the future care of such veterans.

Question 5

Outcome: Outputs 1.2
Topic: Claims Arising from Operation Slipper
(Written Question on Notice)

Senator HURLEY asked:
In relation to the service personnel deployed under Operation Slipper – for the whole period of those operation and in respect of service under this operation:

- How many claims for disability pension have been received by the Department?
- What has been the nature of those claims?
- How many of the claims have related to mental health issues?
- How many of those claims have been accepted?
- Do these accepted claims become part of the official casualty list for Operation Slipper?
    - If no why not?
    - If yes what is the casualty list?
- What has been the cost so far of these claims?
- What is the estimated cost to the Government for the future care of those veterans who have had claims accepted?
- Other than claims for the disability pension what other claims have been received by those that have served in this operation?
- What was the nature of these claims and how many of them have there been?
- What has been the cost so far of these claims?

Answer:
As the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) does not catalogue service personnel deployments at the Operation level for the purpose of determining disability pension claims, it is not possible to provide the details relating to number of claims, the cost of such claims or to estimate the cost for the future care of such veterans.

Question 6

Outcome: Outputs 1.2
Topic: Claims Arising from Operation Anode and Operation Helpem Fren
(Written Question on Notice)

Senator HURLEY asked:
In relation to the service personnel deployed under Operation Anode or Operation Helpem Fren – for the whole period of those operations and in respect of service under this operation:

- How many claims for disability pension have been received by the Department?
- What has been the nature of those claims?
- How many of the claims have related to mental health issues?
- How many of those claims have been accepted?
- Do these accepted claims become part of the official casualty list for these operations?
    - If no why not?
    - If yes what is the casualty list?
- What has been the cost so far of these claims?

- What is the estimated cost to the Government for the future care of those veterans who have had claims accepted?
- Other than claims for the disability pension what other claims have been received by those that have served in these operations?
- What was the nature of these claims and how many of them have there been?
- What has been the cost so far of these claims?

Answer:
As the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) does not catalogue service personnel deployments at the Operation level for the purpose of determining disability pension claims, it is not possible to provide the details relating to number of claims, the cost of such claims or to estimate the cost for the future care of such veterans.

Question 7

Outcome: Outputs 1.2
Topic: Claims Arising from Operation Astute and Operation Tower
(Written Question on Notice)

Senator HURLEY asked:
In relation to the service personnel deployed under Operation Astute or Operation Tower – for the whole period of those operations and in respect of service under this operation:

- How many claims for disability pension have been received by the Department?
- What has been the nature of those claims?
- How many of the claims have related to mental health issues?
- How many of those claims have been accepted?
- Do these accepted claims become part of the official casualty list for these operations?
    - If no why not?
    - If yes what is the casualty list?
- What has been the cost so far of these claims?
- What is the estimated cost to the Government for the future care of those veterans who have had claims accepted?
- Other than claims for the disability pension what other claims have been received by those that have served in these operations?
- What was the nature of these claims and how many of them have there been?
- What has been the cost so far of these claims?

Answer:
As the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) does not catalogue service personnel deployments at the Operation level for the purpose of determining disability pension claims, it is not possible to provide the details relating to number of claims, the cost of such claims or to estimate the cost for the future care of such veterans.

Question 8

Outcome: Outputs 1.2
Topic: Claims Arising from Operation Resolute and its predecessors
(Written Question on Notice)

Senator HURLEY asked:
In relation to the service personnel deployed under Operation Resolute or its predecessors Relex, Relex II, Cranberry, Celesta and Mistral – for the whole period of those operations and in respect of service under this operation:

- How many claims for disability pension have been received by the Department?
- What has been the nature of those claims?
- How many of the claims have related to mental health issues?
- How many of those claims have been accepted?
- Do these accepted claims become part of the official casualty list for these operations?
    - If no why not?
    - If yes what is the casualty list?
- What has been the cost so far of these claims?
- What is the estimated cost to the Government for the future care of those veterans who have had claims accepted?
- Other than claims for the disability pension what other claims have been received by those that have served in these operations?
- What was the nature of these claims and how many of them have there been?
- What has been the cost so far of these claims?

Answer:
As the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) does not catalogue service personnel deployments at the Operation level for the purpose of determining disability pension claims, it is not possible to provide the details relating to number of claims, the cost of such claims or to estimate the cost for the future care of such veterans.

Question 9

Outcome: Output 1.4
Topic: Loan to TPI Association (NSW) re Belmore Units
(Written Question on Notice)

Senator HURLEY asked
Have the final conditions for the loan been set, if so what are they?
What is the term of the loan?
Has the money been provided to the association yet?
What date does the contract for the loan come into effect?
What is the fiscal impact of offering these loans?

When does the principle on the loans have to start to be repaid?
Will the loans be indexed, if so on what basis and how and where will this receivable be presented in the Commonwealth Budget papers?
Are the loans income contingent and if so on what basis?
Under what circumstances would a loan be considered to go 'bad' ie concern over repayment (after 40 years?) and what is the cash and accrual effect?
What are the financial costs of administering this loan?
What are the government's plans if there is a default on the loan?

Answer:
No. The final terms of the proposed loan agreement are still the subject of negotiations between the parties.

The loan will be returned to the Commonwealth once the last of the current tenants vacates his/her unit and the property is sold.

No.

The Government is committed to ensuring that the agreed loan is made available to the T&PI Association as soon as possible this financial year.

An interest-free loan of four million dollars will be secured by a mortgage.

As the term and conditions of the proposed loan agreement are still under negotiation, the remaining questions cannot be answered.

Question 11

Outcome: Outputs 1.2
Topic: Australian Federal Police who served at Maralinga
(Written Question on Notice)

Senator HURLEY asked:
At the Senate Committee hearings into the Government's Australian Participants in Nuclear Tests (Treatment) Bills the issue of members of the Commonwealth Police who served at Maralinga up until 2001 and were likely to have received significant radiation doses as a result of patrolling through areas that were heavily contaminated, particularly with plutonium was raised.

In response to this issue the Department undertook to look into this case and put the proposition that those relevant officers affected should come under the scheme. The Committee endorsed this – can the Department please now advise if this proposition has been considered by the Minister?

- If yes – what were the results?
    - If negative – what was the basis of that decision?
    - If positive – when will it come into force?
- If no – when will it be considered?

Answer: This issue is currently being considered.

Question 14

Outcome: Outputs 1.2 & 1.5
Topic: F–111 Board of Inquiry and Compensation
(Written Question on Notice)

Senator HURLEY asked
Paragraph 1 on page 4 states "In response to health concerns raised by those who participated in the four deseal/reseal programs, the RAAF instigated a Board of Inquiry (BOI) in July 2000.

A media release by the Chief of Air Force, Angus Houston on announcing the findings of the Board of Inquiry states:

> *The 501 Wing Investigation*
> *Late in 1999 a Senior NCO in the F111 fuel tank maintenance cell noticed a number of RAAF members with apparently similar health problems of headaches, nausea, short term memory loss, mood swings and skin disorders. By early in 2000 medical staff became alarmed and contacted the CO of the Aircraft Maintenance Squadron who immediately suspended the respray program. On Friday 29 January the Officer Commanding 501 Wing was informed of the problems. On Monday 31 January he appointed an Investigating Officer to determine if the symptoms staff were exhibiting were connected to the respray program.*
>
> *The Board of Inquiry*
> *Several weeks into the investigation, the Chief of Air Force was approached with concerns that there were possibly problems, not only with the respray program, but with F111 fuel tank maintenance since 1973. Given the magnitude of the possible implications, CAF decided to appoint a Board of Inquiry with wide-ranging Terms of Reference. The Board convened on 19 July 2000 and was provided with a budget of $7.2 million. Counsel assisting the Board interviewed some 700 people, searched through 1.5 millions pages of documents to build a data base for the public hearings. After several weeks of sittings the hearings were completed on 28 May 2001.*

Why has the Minister consistently denied that No 482 (Maintenance), No 1 and No 6 Squadron personnel were not affected by the chemicals involved, and therefore denied them the ex-gratia payment, when the Department of Defence release cited above clearly states that the Board of Inquiry was instigated BECAUSE of the implications to these workers?

DVA states that they have settled most deseal/reseal compensation claims.

- How many claims have been settled?

- How many claims are still outstanding?
- How many of the settled claims have been settled in the applicant's favour?
- Under which Acts do the settled claims come under?
- How many of the claims settled under each Act have compensation payments to the recipients attached to them?

Answer:
In response to health concerns raised by those who participated in the four Deseal/Reseal (DSRS) Programs the RAAF instigated a Board Of Inquiry (BOI) in July 2000. The BOI was set up to inquire and make findings in relation to each of the 1st DSRS; 2nd DSRS; the Spray Seal and the Wing Tank DSRS procedures being collectively referred to as the DSRS Procedures at 501WG Amberley or its predecessors (3AD). The terms of reference did not include those who conducted pick and patch at 482, 1 or 6 SQNs.

The principal finding of the BOI was that in excess of 400 people who had participated in the four DSRS Programs had suffered long term health effects as a result of this involvement. Consequently, the Government agreed to conduct an epidemiological study into the health of personnel involved in the four F-111 DSRS Programs compared with appropriate comparison personnel.

The RAAF have advised that the operation known as "pick and patch" was an ad-hoc and localised maintenance function to effect minor and moderate level repairs to leaking F-111 fuel tanks. Although this task was predominantly undertaken at 482, 1 and 6 SQNs, it could occur anywhere that an F-111 aircraft was located, including on training exercises or other short term deployments. However, except in order to correct leaks still evident following a full scale DSRS procedure, pick and patch was not conducted as part of the four DSRS Programs.

Pick and patch does require aircraft maintenance personnel to enter the F-111 fuel tanks to effect these repairs and does expose these individuals to some of the same chemicals used in the four DSRS Programs. However, the pick and patch duties were limited to entering fuel tanks, hand removing and cleaning the area for the repair, and carrying out relatively quick (in comparison to DSRS activities) sealant overlay repairs to leaking areas.

F-111 fuel tank workers involved in pick and patch activities were not exposed to the same periods of lengthy fuel tank entry, nor to the same levels of chemical exposure as workers on the four DSRS Programs. They were not exposed to the chemicals SR-51 and 51A; nor were they exposed to the dangers and difficulties associated with using the 'water pick laser gun' or the walnut blasting equipment. Although they did use some of the DSRS chemicals and sealants, their duties were significantly less hazardous and onerous than those performed by workers in the formal DSRS programs.

The Department has received compensation claims for deseal/reseal activities under the *Safety Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988* (SRCA) and the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* (VEA). Some claimants have lodged claims under both Acts.

Claims under the SRCA as at 13 March 2007
543 claimants have lodged claims in respect of 3,658 conditions. Of these claimants, 331 have had their claims determined.

There are 212 claimants, with a total of 1,061 conditions, which have not been determined.

272 claimants have had liability accepted in respect of a condition/conditions due to Deseal/Reseal activities and 292 claimants have had liability accepted in respect of a condition/conditions due to general conditions of service – other than Deseal/Reseal.

68 claimants have received Permanent Impairment (PI) lump sum payments totalling $4,665,752.12 and a number of these claimants are also receiving ongoing Incapacity Payments. Not all PI claims have been determined.

Claims under the *VEA* as at 13 March 2007
507 claimants have lodged claims in respect of 3,557 conditions. Of these claimants, 450 have had their claims determined.

There are 57 claimants, with a total of 351 conditions, which have not been determined.

108 claimants have had liability accepted in respect of a condition/conditions due to Deseal/Reseal activities and 303 claimants have had liability accepted in respect of a condition/conditions due to general conditions of service – other than Deseal/Reseal.

205 claimants have received either a grant of disability pension or an increase in the rate of their disability pension.

Question 15

Outcome: Outputs 1.2
Topic: F–111 Deseal Reseal Ex-Gratia Scheme
(Written Question on Notice)

Senator HURLEY asked
In regards to the Government's ex-gratia payment scheme for F-111 Desealer-Resealers how many claims were received by the Department?

- How many are still outstanding?
- When is it expected that these claims will be finalised?
- For those claims that have been processed how many were declined?

Answer:
As at 12 March 2007 the Department had received 1,195 ex-gratia lump sum claims.

- 19 F-111 ex-gratia lump sum claims are outstanding, 10 of which have been received since 1 January 2007.

- It is anticipated that these outstanding claims will be finalised by 31 May 2007.
- 468 claimants were ineligible to receive the F-111 lump sum payment.

Question 17

Outcome 1: Outputs 1.1
Topic: Bonus Payments for Carers of Disabled War Veterans

Senator Hurley asked
Carers of war veterans receiving the Partners Service Pension and Carers Allowance were denied a $1,000 Budget Bonus in 2004 and 2005 that their exact civilian equivalents received.

- Does the government intend paying these missed bonuses?

Additionally, no steps have been taken to identify who amongst those receiving only the Partners Service Pension would qualify as Carers, thus depriving those who would qualify, of the $1,000 Budget Bonus in 2004, 2005 and 2006.

- Does the Department of Veterans Affairs intend identifying the Carers amongst those who receive only the Partners Service Pension?
- If so, does it also intend paying the missed bonuses for this group?

How many people are in receipt of the partners' service pension?

- Can we please have the recipients broken down by a) state and b) new federal electorate boundaries?

Answer:
The 2004 and 2005 bonuses for carers were paid in accordance with the Budget decisions, which were that they be paid to Centrelink's Carer Payment and Carer Allowance recipients.

Following a decision in 1997 to rationalise income support payments across the Department of Veterans' Affairs and Centrelink, Centrelink has been responsible for providing financial assistance to carers. People who consider that they may potentially be eligible to qualify as Carers are encouraged to contact Centrelink.

As at December 2006 there were 100,319 partner service pensioners. Of these, 575 either resided overseas or their State of residence was unknown. The number residing in each State was:

- 30,467 in New South Wales;
- 20,790 in Victoria;
- 22,323 in Queensland;
- 10,386 in South Australia;
- 10,843 in Western Australia;
- 3,640 in Tasmania;
- 227 in the Northern Territory; and
- 1,068 in the Australian Capital Territory.

Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

Additional estimates 2006–2007; 14 February 2007

Answers to questions on notice from Department of Veterans' Affairs

The following table indicates the number of partner service pensioners, as at December 2006, residing in Federal electorates (2007 boundaries):

Electorate	No of partner service pensioners	Electorate	No of partner service pensioners
NEW SOUTH WALES			
Banks	830	Lyne	1,162
Barton	567	Macarthur	444
Bennelong	586	Mackellar	656
Berowra	383	Macquarie	590
Blaxland	831	Mitchell	346
Bradfield	419	New England	672
Calare	541	Newcastle	725
Charlton	783	North Sydney	289
Chifley	384	Page	1,149
Cook	726	Parkes	507
Cowper	1,132	Parramatta	519
Cunningham	529	Paterson	1,033
Dobell	1,007	Prospect	442
Eden-Monaro	711	Reid	428
Farrer	824	Richmond	1,212
Fowler	521	Riverina	586
Gilmore	1,215	Robertson	1,153
Grayndler	243	Shortland	957
Greenway	307	Sydney	164
Hughes	413	Throsby	551
Hume	584	Warringah	455
Hunter	532	Watson	554
Kingsford Smith	406	Wentworth	219
Lindsay	488	Werriwa	375
Lowe	317		
VICTORIA			
Aston	433	Hotham	713
Ballarat	665	Indi	731
Batman	445	Isaacs	633
Bendigo	793	Jagajaga	690
Bruce	497	Kooyong	328
Calwell	274	Lalor	408
Casey	538	La Trobe	494
Chisholm	655	McEwen	483
Corangamite	874	McMillan	668
Corio	684	Mallee	692
Deakin	679	Maribyrnong	440

Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

Additional estimates 2006–2007; 14 February 2007

Answers to questions on notice from Department of Veterans' Affairs

The following table indicates the number of partner service pensioners, as at December 2006, residing in Federal electorates (2007 boundaries):

Electorate	No of partner service pensioners	Electorate	No of partner service pensioners
Dunkley	982	Melbourne	234
Flinders	1,072	Melbourne Ports	229
Gellibrand	515	Menzies	371
Gippsland	812	Murray	696
Goldstein	649	Scullin	261
Gorton	327	Wannon	718
Higgins	279	Wills	482
Holt	346		
QUEENSLAND			
Blair	721	Hinkler	1,349
Bonner	766	Kennedy	638
Bowman	914	Leichhardt	451
Brisbane	530	Lilley	833
Capricornia	579	Longman	1,228
Dawson	546	Maranoa	649
Dickson	725	Mcpherson	1,064
Fadden	807	Moncrieff	788
Fairfax	1,143	Moreton	630
Fisher	1,117	Oxley	641
Flynn	453	Petrie	978
Forde	687	Rankin	514
Griffith	569	Ryan	435
Groom	776	Wide Bay	1,040
Herbert	752		
SOUTH AUSTRALIA			
Adelaide	684	Makin	848
Barker	930	Mayo	956
Boothby	1,106	Port Adelaide	926
Grey	835	Sturt	818
Hindmarsh	1,243	Wakefield	997
Kingston	1,043		
WESTERN AUSTRALIA			
Brand	1,299	Moore	536
Canning	834	O'Connor	665
Cowan	680	Pearce	776
Curtin	611	Perth	712

The following table indicates the number of partner service pensioners, as at December 2006, residing in Federal electorates (2007 boundaries):

Electorate	No of partner service pensioners	Electorate	No of partner service pensioners
Forrest	877	Stirling	802
Fremantle	680	Swan	743
Hasluck	641	Tangney	784
Kalgoorlie	203		
TASMANIA			
Bass	723	Franklin	789
Braddon	802	Lyons	616
Denison	710		
NORTHERN TERRITORY			
Lingiari	84	Solomon	143
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY			
Canberra	483	Fraser	585

Question 18

Outcome: Output: 1.2
Topic: Historical Researchers Tender
(Written Question on Notice)

Senator HURLEY asked

1. Is there a current or planned tender for historical researchers used by the Department?
   - If yes what are the details of the tender – ie closing time, when it will be decided, and scope.

2. Will the tender involve a condition that all employees of the successful tenderer be licensed as private investigators in each state and territory?
   - If no – why not?

3. Will the tender involve a condition that all employees of the successful tenderer be trained to deal with people who may have PTSD?
   - If no – why not?

Answer:

1. In November 2006, DVA issued a Request for Tender for Military Researchers. The tender closed on 31 January 2007 and tenders are currently being evaluated. The purpose is to set up a panel of Military Researchers to provide DVA officers with military research services and factual

reports. The period of tenure will be an initial three year contract with options for two twelve month extensions.

2. No. The RFT includes the following requirement:

> "The successful tenderer will be required to:
>
> – have or be in the process of obtaining relevant State and/or Territory licences for the provision of these services."

3. The tender has no specific provision for training to deal with people who may have PTSD. Military researchers only provide information based on what a DVA Claims Assessor has requested. If the researcher requires further information from the claimant in order to complete their research (for example more specific information on a location or date range), this information is requested through the DVA Claims Assessor.

Question 19

Outcome: Output: 1.2
Topic: Writeway Research Services
(Written Question on Notice)

Senator HURLEY asked
1 Previously, the Department has stated that it did not believe that Writeway Research Services operated as private investigators when employed by DVA. Could you please advise your understanding as to the duties of a private investigator under the Queensland Private Security Providers Act, 1994?

2. Can you explain the Department's understanding of the difference between the duties of a private investigator and that of a Historical Researcher?

3. What inquiries has the Department made to quantify the assessment that Writeway do not carry out the work of private investigators?

4. Is there any legal advice from the department that supports the view that Writeway do not carry out the duties of private investigators? – If so can we please have a copy?

5. During their employment for DVA do Writeway interview persons/witnesses and obtain information?

6. Do they provide written reports, advices in respect of the information they obtain to their client DVA for reward?

7. Are they required in some cases to personally attend Court and or Tribunal Hearings and give evidence on the information they have collected and reports they have provided on behalf to their client DVA?

8. Do Writeway conduct investigations into alleged fraud by veterans and investigate the facts of an issue?

9. How many cases of alleged fraud has Writeway investigated?

10. Are you aware that in 2001, the Queensland Office of Fair Trading and the Queensland Ombudsman informed Mr Tilbrook of Writeway that he needed to be licensed or face prosecution?

11. Given the information contained in letters provided to DVA in 2001 and previously provided to the Department what action did they take to establish what their responsibilities were under the Act in respect of hiring private investigators?

12. Do Writeway Research Services give opinions?

13.Does DEPARTMENTAL INSTRUCTION NO: C11/2005 dated 12 April 2005 expressly forbid Writeway from offering opinions?

Answer:
1. The contracted military researchers who assist in providing reports about events that allegedly took place on service with the ADF are required to comply with all relevant State and Territory laws. The relevant law that has been raised in the particular complaint from Queensland is the Queensland *Security Providers Act 1993* (the Queensland Act). The relevant body which administers the Queensland Act is the Queensland Office of Fair Trading (QOFT). The QOFT advised my Department by telephone on 4 April 2007 that the review of the operations of Writeway in relation to any requirements for being registered as 'private investigators' under Queensland *Security Providers Act 1993* (the QLD Act) has been completed. The QOFT is apparently acting on legal advice from Queensland Crown Law and is intending to commence proceedings against Writeway for breaching the requirements of section 9 of the Qld Act.

As a result of the QOFT advice my Department is presently undertaking an urgent review of the investigation of cases in Queensland involving Writeway and other military researchers. Currently Military Research related to claims with any Queensland connection are being undertaken by Departmental officers.

2. The Department's understanding of the requirements of the Queensland *Security Providers Act 1993* is based on ongoing contact with the Queensland Office of Fair Trading. However, I am unable to comment further due to foreshadowed legal action.

3. The Department has been in direct contact with officers of the Queensland Office of Fair Trading. However I am unable to comment further due to foreshadowed legal action.

4. The question is based on a mistaken premise that the Department administers the Queensland Act and is therefore able to provide legal advice on the operations of that Act. The Department has been involved with a range of written communication and meetings with the Queensland Office of Fair Trading to assist the recently completed investigation into the activities of contracted military researchers who assist in providing reports about events that allegedly took place on service with the

ADF. The Department will await the outcome of the intended legal action by the Queensland Office of Fair Trading and will take appropriate action in the management of the contacts with these researchers based on the outcome of that action.

5. Contracted military researchers who assist in providing reports about events that allegedly took place on service with the ADF are not "employed" by the Department. The Department's understanding of the research activities of these contractors is that they primarily consult published material and official records in the preparation of their reports. However, on some occasions where this material and records do not contain sufficient details relating to the veterans' contention that certain events took place on service, the researcher may interview some persons with knowledge of the operations of the unit in which the veteran served.

6. The contracted military researchers who assist in providing reports about events that allegedly took place on service with the ADF do this under a Services Agreement with the Department.

7. The contracted military researchers who assist in providing reports about events that allegedly took place on service with the ADF can be required to attend proceedings before the Administrative Appeals Tribunal and the Federal Court to be cross-examined about the contents of the reports that they provide.

8. The Department does not use Writeway to conduct investigations into alleged fraud cases.

9. Nil.

10. The Department is aware that there was a finding of the Queensland Office of Fair Trading in relation to a particular complaint that involved Writeway and investigation work that it undertook for Suncorp Metway. Until the recent advice from the Queensland Office of Fair Trading that their review has been completed, the Department had not received any advice from it in relation to the activities of Writeway any other contracted military researchers in connection to activities involving the provision of reports to the Department.

11. As stated above, the 2001 investigation by the Queensland Office of Fair Trading was apparently in relation to a complaint that involved Writeway acting for a private insurer in Queensland and was not related to the military research Writeway undertook for the Department.

12. Contracted military researchers who assist in providing reports about events that allegedly took place on service with the ADF provide opinions on relevant matters (for example whether particular events actually took place on service) where the facts and the basis for that opinion is clearly set out in their report.

13. Departmental Instruction No: C11/2005 states that a researcher must not offer an opinion on the veteran personally. The following extract refers:

> *"The report must not contain or imply any opinions of the researcher on the veteran, the truthfulness of the veteran, the value of his or her service, the reasons for his or her actions or the reasons for making the claim."*

Accordingly, there is no blanket prohibition on military research reports containing the opinions of the authors. What the Departmental Instruction clearly allows is that where the author expresses opinions (eg. in relation to events that are alleged to have taken place on service), those opinions must be backed up by the evidence on which those opinions are based.

Question 20

Outcome: Outputs: 1.2
Topic: War Widows/Widowers Pension Acceptance Rate
(Written Question on Notice)

Senator HURLEY asked
On page 67 of the Department's Annual Report 2005-06 it was reported that '*Nationally there was a drop of 6 per cent in the number of accepted war widow/widower claims*'.

- What was the reason for this decrease?
- What was the acceptance rate, by state and nationally, for war widows/widowers pension over the last five financial years?
- What was the number of primary level claims determined, by state and nationally, over the last five financial years?
- Have there been any changes in requirements for claimants of the war widows/widowers pension over this time? – If yes what were they and what was their rationale?

Answer:

- The majority of War Widow/Widower claims relate to veterans of WWII and these veterans are now of an age where they are increasingly succumbing to age related illnesses that are not as readily capable of being positively linked to their service.

- The acceptance rate, by state and nationally, for war widows/widowers pension over the last five financial years are reported in the Departments Annual Reports.

- The number of primary level claims determined, by state and nationally, over the last five financial years are reported in the Departments Annual Reports.

- No.

Question 21

Outcome: Output: 1.5
Topic: SRCA Claims Acceptance Rate
(Written Question on Notice)

Senator HURLEY asked
In answers to questions on notice at the last estimates the Department provided information that showed an 8 per cent decrease nationally in the acceptance rate for claims under SRCA.

- What was the reason for this decrease?

Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Additional estimates 2006–2007; 14 February 2007
Answers to questions on notice from Department of Veterans' Affairs

- What was the acceptance rate, by state and nationally, for SRCA claims over the last five financial years?
- Have there been any changes in requirements for claimants of the war widows/widowers pension over this time? – If yes what were they and what was their rationale?

Answer:
The SRCA acceptance rate has reduced between 2003-04 and 2005-06.

Scheme	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
SRCA	74%	67%	59%
MRCA	NA	83%	85%
Combined SRCA/MRCA	74%	71%	71%

There are two factors:

1. The introduction of MRCA on 1 July 2004 has resulted in the most recent and least complex claims being determined under MRCA rather than SRCA. As a general rule, the closer a claim is to the date of injury, the higher the acceptance rate. Note that the MRCA rate is much higher than historical SRCA rates.

2. The 2005-06 SRCA rate also reflects the fact that the Deseal/Reseal team processed a large number of claims. Many of these claims have been delayed to enable them to be considered under subsection 7(2) of the SRCA which would give them a greater possibility of being accepted. However, many still do not meet the requirements of this provision and have been rejected.

SRCA Acceptance Rates, by Location

Location	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Perth	75.9	65.1	74.1	72.3	68.2
Hobart	62.1	67.6	68.2	52.6	43.0
Melbourne	63.7	67.6	72.0	58.7	54.5
Adelaide	67.7	73.8	76.3	60.1	66.0
Darwin	66.9	69.3	80.4	71.7	64.6
Canberra	85.9	80.2	81.9	78.3	79.2
Sydney	59.8	69.5	73.4	66.3	54.2
Brisbane	66.5	66.9	70.5	67.1	55.2
Townsville	86.0	83.0	81.5	76.4	63.4
National	**68.5**	**70.5**	**74.2**	**67.4**	**59.3**

It should be noted that there are often variations in acceptance rates due to the demographics of the area covered. For example the size of bases in the region relative to the size of the general community hence higher rates in Canberra and Townsville and to a lesser extent Darwin.

There are no War Widows pensions under the SRCA.

Question 23

Outcome: Outputs 1.1 & 1.2
Topic: DVA Statistics by Electorate
(Written Question on Notice)

Senator HURLEY asked:

1. Can we please have an update of the information contained in the *DVA Client Profile by Federal Electorate* publications on the DVA website in regards to the recent electoral redistributions?

2. What is the total number of DVA Clients, by state, by federal electorates (new boundaries) and by age group? What are the estimated numbers for the financial years 2007–08, 2008–09, 2009–10 and 2010–11?

3. What is the total number of Special Rate Pensioners, by state, by new federal electorates (new boundaries) and by age group? What are the estimated numbers for the financial years 2007–08, 2008–09, 2009–10 and 2010–11?

4. What is the total number of Intermediate Pensioners, by state, by new federal electorates and by age group? What are the estimated numbers for the financial years 2007–08, 2008–09, 2009–10 and 2010–11?

5. For each federal electorate (new boundaries) what is the average age of
   - DVA Client Population

Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Additional estimates 2006–2007; 14 February 2007
Answers to questions on notice from Department of Veterans' Affairs

- DVA Treatment Population
- Special rate Pensioners
- Intermediate Rate Pensioners
- EDA Pensioners
- War Widows

Answer:

1. The *DVA Client Profile by Federal Electorate* publications are available on the DVA website in regards to the recent electoral redistributions. The DVA Client Profile by Federal Electorate publication is compiled to reflect existing official electorate boundaries and will be updated after the next General Election.

2. Refer to Attachment 23A. It is estimated that the total number of DVA clients will be:
   - 413,400 in 2007-08;
   - 392,400 in 2008-09;
   - 371,100 in 2009-10; and
   - 349,500 in 2010-11.

3. The following table details the total number of Special Rate pensioners, by state and by new federal electorates as at 5/1/07:

New South Wales	
Banks	112
Barton	90
Bennelong	106
Berowra	71
Blaxland	67
Bradfield	76
Calare	175
Charlton	224
Chifley	110
Cook	128
Cowper	427
Cunningham	103
Dobell	262
Eden-Monaro	240
Farrer	257
Fowler	44
Gilmore	377
Grayndler	37
Greenway	136
Hughes	127
Hume	218
Hunter	223
Kingsford Smith	77
Lindsay	172
Lowe	73
Lyne	368
Macarthur	123

Victoria	
Aston	92
Ballarat	197
Batman	52
Bendigo	233
Bruce	83
Calwell	72
Casey	87
Chisholm	63
Corangamite	183
Corio	152
Deakin	79
Dunkley	193
Flinders	219
Gellibrand	52
Gippsland	229
Goldstein	99
Gorton	43
Higgins	52
Holt	91
Hotham	64
Indi	293
Isaacs	96
Jagajaga	158
Kooyong	53
Lalor	138
La Trobe	102
McEwen	168

Queensland	
Blair	312
Bonner	204
Bowman	309
Brisbane	165
Capricornia	232
Dawson	226
Dickson	402
Fadden	260
Fairfax	388
Fisher	436
Flynn	234
Forde	305
Griffith	124
Groom	252
Herbert	504
Hinkler	588
Kennedy	315
Leichhardt	225
Lilley	192
Longman	593
Maranoa	291
Mcpherson	312
Moncrieff	264
Moreton	153
Oxley	200
Petrie	275
Rankin	229

Mackellar	170
Macquarie	169
Mitchell	93
New England	249
Newcastle	165
North Sydney	66
Page	423
Parkes	204
Parramatta	84
Paterson	354
Prospect	64
Reid	55
Richmond	406
Riverina	184
Robertson	314
Shortland	281
Sydney	55
Throsby	119
Warringah	130
Watson	81
Wentworth	76
Werriwa	128
Total NSW	**8,293**

McMillan	147
Mallee	195
Maribyrnong	54
Melbourne	47
Melbourne Ports	38
Menzies	59
Murray	192
Scullin	69
Wannon	161
Wills	65
Total Vic	**4,370**

South Australia	
Adelaide	112
Barker	259
Boothby	176
Grey	305
Hindmarsh	220
Kingston	302
Makin	230
Mayo	255
Port Adelaide	158
Sturt	128
Wakefield	210
Total SA	**2,355**

Ryan	131
Wide Bay	480
Total Qld	**8,601**

Western Australia	
Brand	396
Canning	309
Cowan	241
Curtin	109
Forrest	315
Fremantle	176
Hasluck	180
Kalgoorlie	103
Moore	249
O'Connor	229
Pearce	300
Perth	132
Stirling	206
Swan	157
Tangney	152
Total WA	**3,254**

Tasmania	
Bass	232
Braddon	236
Denison	245
Franklin	327
Lyons	303
Total Tas	**1,343**

Northern Territory	
Lingiari	59
Solomon	110
Total NT	**169**

Australian Capital Territory	
Canberra	214
Fraser	192
Total ACT	**406**

Overseas or Unknown Electorate	
Unknown	196

Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Additional estimates 2006–2007; 14 February 2007
Answers to questions on notice from Department of Veterans' Affairs

The following table details the total number of Special Rate pensioners by age group as at 5/1/07:

Age Group	Special Rate Pensioners
Under 45	771
45 to 49	559
50 to 54	867
55 to 59	9,042
60 to 64	8,945
65 to 69	2,385
70 to 74	915
75 to 79	615
80 to 84	2,745
85 to 89	1,778
90 or over	365
Total	**28,987**

It is estimated that the total number of Special Rate pensioners will be:

- 28,720 in 2007-08;
- 28,380 in 2008-09;
- 27,950 in 2009-10; and
- 27,430 in 2010-11.

4. The following table details the total number of Intermediate Rate pensioners, by state and new Federal Electorate as at 5/1/07. Due to Privacy legislation, the exact number in some Electorates have not been provided.

New South Wales		Victoria		Queensland	
Banks	6	Aston	*	Blair	9
Barton	6	Ballarat	5	Bonner	7
Bennelong	7	Batman	*	Bowman	5
Berowra	*	Bendigo	7	Brisbane	12
Blaxland	*	Bruce	*	Capricornia	4
Bradfield	9	Calwell	*	Dawson	6
Calare	9	Casey	*	Dickson	9
Charlton	4	Chisholm	*	Fadden	8
Chifley	4	Corangamite	10	Fairfax	13
Cook	*	Corio	6	Fisher	12
Cowper	24	Deakin	*	Flynn	*
Cunningham	4	Dunkley	6	Forde	6
Dobell	14	Flinders	6	Griffith	0
Eden-Monaro	11	Gellibrand	4	Groom	10
Farrer	11	Gippsland	8	Herbert	*
Fowler	*	Goldstein	5	Hinkler	9
Gilmore	5	Gorton	0	Kennedy	9
Grayndler	*	Higgins	0	Leichhardt	5
Greenway	6	Holt	*	Lilley	8
Hughes	*	Hotham	6	Longman	14

Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Additional estimates 2006–2007; 14 February 2007
Answers to questions on notice from Department of Veterans' Affairs

Hume	15
Hunter	4
Kingsford Smith	6
Lindsay	5
Lowe	*
Lyne	10
Macarthur	*
Mackellar	11
Macquarie	5
Mitchell	0
New England	9
Newcastle	7
North Sydney	8
Page	15
Parkes	8
Parramatta	5
Paterson	12
Prospect	*
Reid	0
Richmond	13
Riverina	6
Robertson	13
Shortland	6
Sydney	7
Throsby	0
Warringah	6
Watson	*
Wentworth	*
Werriwa	5
Total NSW	**321**

Indi	*
Isaacs	*
Jagajaga	11
Kooyong	*
Lalor	7
La Trobe	*
McEwen	6
McMillan	5
Mallee	*
Maribyrnong	5
Melbourne	*
Melbourne Ports	*
Menzies	*
Murray	11
Scullin	*
Wannon	8
Wills	5
Total Vic	155

Maranoa	6
Mcpherson	9
Moncrieff	10
Moreton	*
Oxley	8
Petrie	11
Rankin	9
Ryan	5
Wide Bay	14
Total Qld	**225**

South Australia	
Adelaide	11
Barker	13
Boothby	6
Grey	11
Hindmarsh	9
Kingston	10
Makin	6
Mayo	8
Port Adelaide	6
Sturt	*
Wakefield	11
Total SA	**92**

Western Australia	
Brand	13
Canning	6
Cowan	7
Curtin	6
Forrest	7
Fremantle	*
Hasluck	4
Kalgoorlie	*
Moore	8
O'Connor	6
Pearce	7
Perth	6
Stirling	7
Swan	*
Tangney	5
Total WA	**87**

Tasmania	
Bass	4
Braddon	*
Denison	*
Franklin	*
Lyons	9
Total Tas	**21**

Northern Territory	
Lingiari	*
Solomon	*
Total NT	6

Australian Capital Territory	
Canberra	11
Fraser	7
Total ACT	18

Overseas or Unknown Electorate	
Unknown	7

* Denotes that between 1 and 3 (inclusive) Intermediate Rate pensioners reside in the Electorate.

The following table details the total number of Intermediate Rate pensioners by age group as at 5/1/07:

Age Group	Intermediate Rate pensioners
Under 45	63
45 to 49	53
50 to 54	81
55 to 59	200
60 to 64	162
65 to 69	54
70 to 74	30
75 to 79	24
80 to 84	145
85 to 89	93
90 or over	27
Total	**932**

It is estimated that the total number of Intermediate Rate pensioners will be:

- 920 in 2007-08;
- 910 in 2008-09;
- 900 in 2009-10; and
- 880 in 2010-11.

5. ***Refer to Attachment 23B.***

Question 25

Outcome: Outputs 1.2
Topic: Extreme Disablement Adjustment Pension
(Written Question on Notice)

Senator HURLEY asked:
How many recipients of the EDA pension are there?

What is the projected population estimates for this group over the next 10 years?

Can we have a breakdown of recipients of the EDA pension by a) age b) state c) electorate (new boundaries) and d) conflict? For the electorate breakdown can we please have this based on the recent electoral redistributions?

Answer:
As at 5 January 2007, there were 13,928 recipients of the Extreme Disablement Adjustment (EDA). The projected estimates for this group are:

2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
13,700	13,000	12,100	11,200	10,200	9,300	8,300	7,500	6,700	6,100

Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Additional estimates 2006–2007; 14 February 2007
Answers to questions on notice from Department of Veterans' Affairs

As at 5 January 2007, the breakdown of EDA recipients by age was:

65-69	70-74	75-79	80-84	85-89	90 & over
160	518	1,234	6,901	4,287	828

As at 5 January 2007, the breakdown of EDA recipients by State of residence was:

NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	Unknown
5,147	3,888	3,082	656	707	286	11	121	30

As at 5 January 2007, the breakdown of EDA recipients by Electorate was:

NEW SOUTH WALES

Electorate	EDAs	Electorate	EDAs	Electorate	EDAs	Electorate	EDAs
Banks	188	Farrer	171	Macquarie	71	Shortland	169
Barton	106	Fowler	20	Mitchell	39	Sydney	16
Bennelong	87	Gilmore	185	New England	125	Throsby	72
Berowra	56	Grayndler	33	Newcastle	120	Warringah	81
Blaxland	93	Greenway	34	North Sydney	61	Watson	96
Bradfield	80	Hughes	70	Page	215	Wentworth	45
Calare	76	Hume	79	Parkes	98	Werriwa	43
Charlton	123	Hunter	84	Parramatta	61		
Chifley	40	Kingsford Smith	78	Paterson	222		
Cook	134	Lindsay	62	Prospect	34		
Cowper	230	Lowe	45	Reid	82		
Cunningham	102	Lyne	206	Richmond	273		
Dobell	198	Macarthur	68	Riverina	71		
Eden-Monaro	91	Mackellar	132	Robertson	282		

VICTORIA

Electorate	EDAs	Electorate	EDAs	Electorate	EDAs	Electorate	EDAs
Aston	69	Deakin	104	Indi	116	Melbourne	41
Ballarat	116	Dunkley	174	Isaacs	120	Melbourne Ports	42
Batman	112	Flinders	266	Jagajaga	146	Menzies	59
Bendigo	263	Gellibrand	100	Kooyong	72	Murray	151
Bruce	58	Gippsland	105	Lalor	39	Scullin	47
Calwell	45	Goldstein	148	La Trobe	45	Wannon	73
Casey	68	Gorton	22	McEwen	81	Wills	165
Chisholm	106	Higgins	57	McMillan	86		
Corangamite	225	Holt	47	Mallee	171		
Corio	161	Hotham	96	Maribyrnong	92		

QUEENSLAND

Electorate	EDAs	Electorate	EDAs	Electorate	EDAs	Electorate	EDAs
Blair	106	Fairfax	152	Kennedy	51	Oxley	60
Bonner	84	Fisher	153	Leichhardt	41	Petrie	127
Bowman	102	Flynn	51	Lilley	132	Rankin	50
Brisbane	83	Forde	82	Longman	149	Ryan	50

Capricornia	56	Griffith	88	Maranoa	93	Wide Bay	117
Dawson	71	Groom	66	Mcpherson	284		
Dickson	63	Herbert	70	Moncrieff	254		
Fadden	159	Hinkler	221	Moreton	67		

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Electorate	EDAs	Electorate	EDAs	Electorate	EDAs	Electorate	EDAs
Adelaide	49	Grey	42	Makin	28	Sturt	48
Barker	66	Hindmarsh	129	Mayo	59	Wakefield	26
Boothby	111	Kingston	44	Port Adelaide	54		

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Electorate	EDAs	Electorate	EDAs	Electorate	EDAs	Electorate	EDAs
Brand	95	Forrest	53	Moore	27	Stirling	62
Canning	36	Fremantle	64	O'Connor	31	Swan	59
Cowan	36	Hasluck	23	Pearce	26	Tangney	60
Curtin	75	Kalgoorlie	12	Perth	48		

TASMANIA

Electorate	EDAs	Electorate	EDAs	Electorate	EDAs
Bass	57	Denison	54	Lyons	45
Braddon	73	Franklin	57		

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Electorate	EDAs
Lingiari	*
Solomon	*

* Due to the low number of recipients the Department is prevented by the *Privacy Act 1988* of revealing the numbers.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Electorate	EDAs
Canberra	54
Fraser	67

As at 5 January 2007, the breakdown of EDA recipients by conflict was:

WW2	Korea*	Vietnam	Peacetime	Other**
12,580	1,084	232	21	11

* includes Malaya and Far East Strategic Reserve
** Peacekeeping and conflict unknown

Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Additional estimates 2006–2007; 14 February 2007
Answers to questions on notice from Department of Veterans' Affairs

Question 26

Outcome: Outputs 1.1 & 1.2
Topic: British Commonwealth Occupational Forces
(Written Question on Notice)

Senator HURLEY asked:
How many surviving BCOF personnel qualify only for non-warlike hazardous service due to their service in Japan and do not already have a gold card?

How is this population expected to change over the next four years?

Can we please have a breakdown of surviving BCOF members who only qualify for non-warlike hazardous service and have no gold card by a) state and b) new electorate boundaries?

Answer:
At June 2006, it is estimated that there were 4,800 BCOF survivors, approximately 50 per cent of whom have qualifying service.

The estimated number of surviving BCOF members over the next 4 years are:
- 4,420 in June 2007;
- 4,040 in June 2008;
- 3,650 in June 2009;
- 3,270 in June 2010.

The Department does not have information on surviving BCOF members to establish their entitlements or their place of residence.

Question 27

Outcome: Output: 1.1
Topic: Enhanced Compliance Program
(Written Question on Notice)

Senator HURLEY asked
Can we please have an update on this program?

Answer:
The Enhanced Compliance Program is a nationally co-ordinated program of comprehensive risk-based reviews. Each year approximately 10,000 reviews are conducted of the personal and financial circumstances of selected income support pensioner households assessed as being at risk of not being paid the correct rate of pension. A total of 32,500 reviews are to be initiated between May 2004 and
June 2007.

General principles used in identifying high risk assessments include the lack of any recent review and the existence of potentially volatile income and assets items included in the assessment of pension.

At 28 February 2007, 24,772 reviews have been completed since the program commenced in May 2004. Savings projected to 30 June 2007 for the 24,772 completed reviews is $23.15 million.

There are also further savings forthcoming through the recovery of overpaid pensions. Approximately 20 per cent of compliance reviews are being referred for investigation into a possible overpayment of pension.

At 28 February 2007, 2,343 overpayments had been calculated with a total of $9.2 million in overpaid pensions. The vast majority of the overpayments have resulted from investments that have gradually increased in value over time.

In calculating the projected savings, pension variation amounts are carried forward until 30 June 2007. The projected variation amounts are reduced each financial year through the application of an amount equivalent to the pensioner mortality rate for that year.

As a result of the program, some pensions increase, some reduce and some continue at the same level. Of the 24,772 completed reviews:

- 12,027 (48.55 per cent) resulted in a reduction;
- 4,832 (19.51 per cent) resulted in an increase; and
- 7,913 (31.94 per cent) resulted in no change to the rate of payment .

The average variation in respect of the 24,772 completed reviews is a reduction of $18.98 per fortnight.

At this point there has been no significant change to the general policy of relying on pensioners to notify the Department of information about changes in their personal or financial circumstances that may affect the amount of pension they receive. However, pensioners identified as at risk of not complying with their notification obligations are now being identified for inclusion in regular Departmental initiated reviews.

A number of strategies have been implemented to reduce the likelihood of similar reasons for overpayments occurring in the future. These include:

- on completion of a compliance review, pensioners are provided with a statement listing all income and assets included in their pension assessment and advised of their obligations to notify the Department of any changes to their personal or financial circumstances;

- pensioners identified as at risk of not complying with their notification obligations will participate in regular Departmental initiated reviews to reduce the risk that an overpayment of pension could re-occur; and

- a project is underway that analyses the causes of overpayments detected through the Enhanced Compliance Program and data matching to identify trends and recommend preventative action.

Question 31

Outcome: Outputs: 1.2, 1.5 and 1.7
Topic: Single Form Workgroup
(Written Question on Notice)

Senator HURLEY asked
Can we please have an update on the possible implementation of a new single claim form?

When does the Department expect that it will be in a position to introduce this form?

Answer:
As at 28 May 2007, an initial draft of a new single claim form for liability for injury or disease and/or reassessment of compensation has been completed and is now being refined following comment from internal circulation.

Prior to implementation, consultation with the veteran community will also occur.

Because of the complexity of incorporating the requirements of the three Acts administered by the Department into a suitable straightforward claim form, it is not possible at this early stage to give a firm introductory date.

Question 32

Outcome: Output: 1.2
Topic: Review of Veterans' Housing Insurance Scheme
(Written Question on Notice)

Senator HURLEY asked
Has the Government considered the scoping study yet? If so what have been the results and can we please have a copy? If not when is it expected that this will be considered?

Answer:
As at 28 May 2007, the scoping study has been completed and the recommendations have been presented to the Department. The Department will be providing advice to policy holders and ex-service organisations once it has further reviewed matters raised in the report.

Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Additional estimates 2006–2007; 14 February 2007
Answers to questions on notice from Department of Veterans' Affairs

Question 33

Outcome: Outputs: 1.1, 1.2, 1.5 and 1.7
Topic: Claims Processing - Backlogs
(Written Question on Notice)

Senator HURLEY asked
Where applicable, at the end of the financial years 2000-01, 2001-02, 2002-03, 2003-04, 2004-05 what was the number of outstanding claims that existed, and had taken longer than the Department's target time to process for the following:
1. Disability Pensions
2. DFISA (Defence Force Income Support Allowance)
3. Service Pension
4. Partner Service Pension
5. War Widow's and Orphan Pension
6. ISS
7. claims under the SCRA
8. claims under the MRCA

Answer:
1. Disability Pensions

2000-01	2411	
2001-02	2372	
2002-03	2292	
2003-04	3241 #	
2004-05	3818 #	# includes F111 Deseal/Reseal cases

2. DFISA

2000-01	4
2001-02	1
2002-03	1
2003-04	5
2004-05	4

3. Service Pension

2000-01	434
2001-02	266
2002-03	211
2003-04	259
2004-05	226

4. Partner Service Pension

2000-01	35
2001-02	29
2002-03	20
2003-04	25

2004-05 21

5. War Widow's and Orphan Pension

2000-01	151	
2001-02	110	
2002-03	97	
2003-04	147 #	
2004-05	204 #	# includes F111 Deseal/Reseal cases

6. ISS

2000-01	189
2001-02	72
2002-03	33
2003-04	184
2004-05	32

7. SRCA
2004-05 2006
Performance standards for SRCA have only recently been introduced hence historical data in relation to outstanding claims at a point in time is not available.

8. MRCA
2004-05 335
MRCA took effect from 1 July 2004 so data prior to this date does not exist.

Question 34

Outcome: Outputs: 1.1, 1.2, 1.5 and 1.7
Topic: Claims Processing - Times
(Written Question on Notice)

Senator HURLEY asked
Where applicable, at the end of the financial years 2000-01, 2001-02, 2002-03, 2003-04, 2004-05 what was the average time taken to process claims and the Department's target times, for the following:
1. Disability Pensions
2. DFISA (Defence Force Income Support Allowance)
3. Service Pension
4. Partner Service Pension
5. War Widow's and Orphan Pension
6. ISS
7. claims under the SCRA
8. claims under the MRCA

Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Additional estimates 2006–2007; 14 February 2007
Answers to questions on notice from Department of Veterans' Affairs

Answer:

1. Disability Pensions

Year	Mean/Average	Target
2000-01	86	75
2001-02	90	75
2002-03	86	75
2003-04	98#	75
2004-05	120#	75

includes F111 Deseal/Reseal cases

2. DFISA

Year	Mean/Average	Target
2000-01	33	32
2001-02	26	32
2002-03	20	32
2003-04	24	32
2004-05	24	32

3. Service Pension

Year	Mean/Average	Target
2000-01	39	32
2001-02	44	32
2002-03	36	32
2003-04	40	32
2004-05	48	32

4. Partner Service Pension

Year	Mean/Average	Target
2000-01	27	32
2001-02	29	32
2002-03	22	32
2003-04	23	32
2004-05	25	32

5. War Widow's and Orphan Pension

Year	Mean/Average	Target
2000-01	32	75
2001-02	32	75
2002-03	31	75
2003-04	35#	75
2004-05	45#	75

includes F111 Deseal/Reseal cases

6. ISS

Year	Mean/Average	Target
2000-01	26	32
2001-02	30	32
2002-03	17	32
2003-04	32	32
2004-05	30	32

7. SRCA

Year	Performance	Target
2000-01	167	150
2001-02	159	150
2002-03	117	120
2003-04	99	120
2004-05	122	120

8. MRCA

Year	Performance	Target
2004-05	90	120

Question 42

Repatriation Medical Authority

Outcome: Output 1.2
Topic: Repatriation Medical Authority
(Written Question on Notice)

Senator HURLEY asked:
(1) How many staff currently work at the RMA?

(2) Over the last two financial years how many
a) New SoPs have been developed by the RMA;
b) SoPs have been revised by the RMA; and
c) SoPs have been reviewed by the RMA.

(3) What is the average time currently taken to review an SoP?

(4) What is the current backlog in reviews of SoPs by the RMA?

Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Additional estimates 2006–2007; 14 February 2007
Answers to questions on notice from Department of Veterans' Affairs

Answer:

(1) The Repatriation Medical Authority ('the RMA') consists of five (5) part-time statutory office-holders, consisting of a Chairperson and four Members.

The RMA Secretariat, which supports the work of the RMA, currently employs thirteen (13) staff. One position, normally filled, is currently unstaffed.

(2) Over the last two financial years:

a) 24 new SOPs have been determined by the RMA. These consist of 8 SOPs covering 4 new conditions in 2004-05, and 16 SOPs covering 8 new conditions in 2005-06. A new SOP concerns an injury or disease for which no SOP applied prior to the RMA's determination;
b) 11 SOPs have been amended by the RMA. These consist of 5 amendments in 2004/05, and 6 amendments in 2005-06;
c) 86 SOPs have been reviewed by the RMA. These consist of 36 SOPs revoking previously determined SOPs covering 18 conditions in 2004-05, and 50 SOPs revoking previously determined SOPs covering 25 conditions in 2005-06.

(3) Currently the average time taken to complete an investigation notified by the RMA is **593** days (based on investigations completed in 2005-06). This includes **all investigations** – those concerning injuries or diseases for which no SOP applied prior to the investigation; investigations where a SOP previously determined was being reviewed; and those investigations where the RMA ultimately determined not to issue a SOP.

For the category of investigations which involve the review of a previously determined SOP, the average time taken is **632** days (based on investigations [reviews] completed in 2005-06).

The time taken is measured from the date on which a notice of investigation appears in the Government Notices Gazette, in accordance with s196G of the *Veterans Entitlements Act 1986*, to the date on which the newly determined SOP takes effect, in accordance with s12 of the *Legislative Instruments Act 2003* (or the decision not to make or amend a SOP is notified in the Government Notices Gazette in accordance with s196B of the *Veterans Entitlements Act 1986).*

(4) As at 16 March 2007 the RMA has 86 investigations outstanding. 81 investigations concern injuries or diseases where a SOP previously determined is being reviewed, and 5 investigations concern conditions in relation to which no SOP has been determined by the RMA.

Question 43

Outcome: Output 1.2
Topic: Specialist Medical Review Council
(Written Question on Notice)

Senator HURLEY asked:
How many staff currently work at the SMRC?

Over the last two financial years how many SoPs have been:
- revised by the SMRC as a result of an appeal
- reviewed by the SMRC as a result of an appeal

What is the current backlog of appeals of SoPs in the SMRC?

Answer:
Two full-time staff currently work at the SMRC.

- 1 Statement of Principles (SoP) has been revised by the SMRC as the result of an appeal in the last two financial years.

- 2 SoPs have been reviewed by the SMRC as the result of an appeal in the last two financial years.

There are nine requests for review currently with the SMRC. These requests cover a total of 17 SoP factors.

Question 57

Australian War Memorial

Outcome: **Output 1.4**
Topic: Australian War Memorial Post 1945 Gallery
(Written Question on Notice)

Senator HURLEY asked:
(1) What is the current status of the post 1945 Gallery at the Australian War Memorial?

(2) What has been the total cost of works so far completed?

(3) What are the estimated remaining costs of the works?

(4) When will the work be finished? Will there be an official opening if so when will this take place?

(5) Could an update on all other capital work at the AWM be provided?

Answer:

(1) The main building construction or primary works phase of the project commenced in August 2006 and is due for completion in late April 2007. In this phase of work all major demolition and construction to the base building occurs to prepare the space for the new exhibitions.

The exhibition fit-out or secondary works phase of the project commenced in March 2007 and is due for completion in July 2007. In this phase of work the exhibition fit-out is constructed and installed into the space.

(2) The amount of expenditure incurred for all works completed to date is $8.8million. This amount includes payments for: project management; architectural design, exhibition design, primary works construction and administrative costs including salaries.

(3) The estimated cost of works remaining is $14.3 million.

(4) The galleries are expected to open in late 2007. An official opening will be held: a date for this is yet to be set.

(5) There are two other capital works projects underway at the Memorial:

a. Power and cooling upgrade
A major power and cooling infrastructure replacement for the Memorial Building and chiller replacement for the storage facility Treloar C at Mitchell ACT is scheduled for completion in 2007. A multiple tender process covering both the power and cooling upgrades is complete with confirmation of preferred tenderers expected by end March. Budget cost for these works is estimated at approximately $2M.

b. Security electronic infrastructure upgrade
During 2007-2008 the Memorial intends to upgrade its electronic security infrastructure (intruder detection, access control, closed circuit TV and supporting elements). A three stage contractor selection process reached conclusion in early February 2007. The preferred tender is expected to be confirmed by end March. Budget cost for these works is estimated at approximately $1M.

Question 74

Outcome:
Topic: International Veterans Affairs Summit
(Written Question on Notice)

Senator HURLEY asked:
Can you please explain the purpose and value of the International Ministerial Summit of Ministers for Veterans' Administration?
How many participants in total took part in the conference including staff?
What tangible outcomes for Australian veterans were achieved at this summit?

Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Additional estimates 2006–2007; 14 February 2007
Answers to questions on notice from Department of Veterans' Affairs

Was Australia the official host of the 2006 Summit?
What are the official duties, roles and obligations of the host nation?
Does the host nation pay for any organisational costs?

- If yes what are these costs ie do they cover travel, accommodation, venue hire etc?

In a Media Release dated 16 March 2005 the former Minister for Veterans Affairs, De Anne Kelly, when speaking about the International Summit said that she invited the Ministers involved to Australia for the 2006 Summit – when was the decision made to hold the conference in Paris rather than Australia?

- Who made this decision?
- What were the reasons for this decision?
- When was this decision made?
- What additional costs were there to the taxpayer to hold this event overseas, rather than here in Australia?

The first Summit was hosted by the UK and held in London, the next Summit is to be hosted by the USA – does the Department have any information on where this will be held?
Can we please have a copy of all reports, presentations or papers presented at this Summit?

Answer:

- The purpose of the Ministerial Summit is to address future strategic challenges, to share ideas and best practice in taking forward programmes in support of veterans and to discuss issues common to all Veterans' Administrations. The Summit also provides the opportunity to re-forge and develop the important international links on veterans' affairs.

  The following excerpt from the joint Communiqué issued following the Summit, may provide an insight into the value of the Summits –
  "Veteran administrations recognised that the profile of the veteran community is changing with more women in service, a large ageing cohort and a small but increasing number of younger veterans from more recent engagements. This coupled with the increased reliance on reservists, necessitates a different approach to identifying veteran needs and to ensure that they access appropriate and timely support. The challenge presented by mental health conditions was recognised and the sharing of information and strategies in this important area was an ongoing commitment of the Summit.

  The importance of maintaining the health and wellbeing of our current serving personnel, including their level of family support, and its impact on overall military capability cannot be understated.

  Further, the transition from military to civilian life presents issues and challenges for which we can each build upon the experiences of the others to promote effective transition strategies."

- 17 which included the Ministers and observers from each country.

- Yes

- The host nation assumes the role of event co-ordinator and secretariat and organises both business and social programs. Duties include developing the program in collaboration with all member countries, arranging venues, booking accommodation, addressing security issues and ensuring that the participants are aware of their commitments during the Summit.

- Yes. The host nation usually covers the costs of accommodation and associated events. Each nation covers their own costs for travel and accommodation.

- The decision to hold the Summit in Paris was made when it was discovered that the majority of Ministers had accepted an invitation to attend the 1st International Conference on Shared Memory in Paris hosted by the French Government around the same time as the planned Summit in Australia. The Prime Minister's approval was received on 4 September 2006.

  The reason for the change was because of the significant cost savings (particularly around security) to the Australian Government by taking advantage of all relevant Ministers attending the French event. It is estimated the cost savings related to security and the program of events is in the vicinity of $100,000.

- Not finalised but would expect in Washington.

- This was a closed meeting and Ministers did not distribute copies of their presentations. Enclosed is the Summit Agenda and the joint Communiqué issued following the Summit.

Question 85

Outcome: Output: 1.2
Topic: TPI
(Hurley / Hansard Proof, 14 February 2007, p107)

Answer: *See Question 3*

Question 86

Outcome: Output: 1.2
Topic: Compensation Claims: Iraq and Operation Catalyst
(Hurley / Hansard Proof, 14 February 2007, pp 107 - 108)

Answer: *See Question 4*

Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Additional estimates 2006–2007; 14 February 2007
Answers to questions on notice from Department of Veterans' Affairs

Question 87

Outcome: Output: 1.2
Topic: PTSD
(HURLEY/Hansard Proof, 14 February 2007, p 109)

Senator HURLEY—I would like to move on to the general area of post traumatic stress disorder claims. An article entitled 'Surge in diggers' disorder claims' was printed in the *Australian* on 29 January this year. That article made a number of claims that I want to explore. Firstly, it stated that there had been 15,000 successful claims for PTSD out of the 60,000 Defence personnel who served in Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s. Is that correct?
Mr Douglas—I cannot confirm your figure. It is not a figure that sticks in my mind or one that I can immediately find a briefing on, but I would not necessarily deny it either. I would like to take on notice confirmation of a precise figure like that.

Senator Hurley—Can the committee have a copy of the FOI document?
Mr Sullivan—Of course you can. You can make an FOI request and get exactly the same material. I will shortcut that by saying that we will provide you the information and you may find out why there can be some doubt between the volumes of information provided and a four-paragraph article and whether there is an issue of accuracy.

Mr Sullivan—I am not commenting any further. I am not saying that it is inaccurate or accurate. I am not going to provide hundreds and hundreds of documents and then determine that four paragraphs are accurate or not; it is his story. If you want some statistics on PTSD in Vietnam, I can give you some. Rather than talk about a newspaper article, I can give you some very good statistics on PTSD in Vietnam veterans.
Senator HURLEY—I would appreciate that. If I could just flag a particular area of interest: between 2004 and last year—so the recent statistics—and how many claims were accepted. I think the article said that there were 3,069 Australian military members who had served overseas. What percentage of those were PTSD and what claims were resolved?

Answer:
The quoted figure of 15,000 successful PTSD claims for Vietnam veterans has been verified.

For the period 1 January 2004 to 31 December 2006 there were 3,675 claims determined for PTSD and 3,134 of these were accepted. 3,266 of the 3,675 claims were from personnel who had served overseas and 2,811 or 86.2 per cent of these claims were successful.

Note that the figures provided to *The Australian* included 2006 statistics to 2 December 2006 only, and were notated as such. The 3,069 figure was the total number of accepted PTSD claims for the period 1 January 2004 to 2 December 2006.

Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Additional estimates 2006–2007; 14 February 2007
Answers to questions on notice from Department of Veterans' Affairs

Question 92

Outcome: Outputs 1.2
Topic: F111 - Claims
(HURLEY/Hansard Proof, 14 February 2007, p118)

Answer: *See Question 15*

Question 100

Outcome: Outputs 1.2
Topic: Funeral Allowances
(HURLEY/Hansard Proof, 14 February 2007, p127,128)

Senator HURLEY—Last year how many people received that allowance?
Mr Sullivan—I think we would need to take that on notice.

Answer:
In 2005-06 there were 9,591 payments of funeral allowance under the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986.*

Question 101

Outcome: Outputs 1.2
Topic: Transport Travel Allowance for Gold Card Holders
(HURLEY/Hansard Proof, 14 February 2007, p.129)

Senator HURLEY—Just in the final few minutes that we have left, I want to talk about transport for gold card holders. Are there any regulations that specify a gold card holder is allowed only one DVA provided vehicle return trip per day regardless of how many consultations or appointments they have?

Mr Sullivan—Not that I am aware of. I think a DVA—a veteran who is meeting the guidelines as to travel will have that travel met. I will come back to you if I am mistaken in that belief, but I am very confident that there is no such restriction.

Answer: No.

Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Additional estimates 2006–2007; 14 February 2007
Answers to questions on notice from Department of Veterans' Affairs

Question 102

Outcome: 1/2
Topic: Compensation of Prisoners of War
(HURLEY/Hansard Proof, 14 February 2007, p. 129)

Senator HURLEY—Do we have any figures about Australian prisoners of war in Europe, how many are still alive?

Mr Sullivan—I can give you those numbers. Would you like the figures of the widows of prisoners who are not alive? That is important material as well because you cannot forget the widows.

Senator HURLEY—Yes, that was going to be my next question. If I could have those statistics as well that would be good.

Answer:
As at 31 December 2006, there were 732 veterans receiving assistance from the Department and known to be Australian prisoners-of-war of Europe. In addition, there were 1,250 widows/ers receiving assistance from the Department who were known to be a widow/er of a deceased veterans who was an Australian prisoners-of-war of Europe.