



VIETNAM VETERANS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA MEDIA RELEASE

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VIETNAM WAR VETERANS TO CONGREGATE IN SYDNEY

The National President of the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia (VVAA) Brian McKenzie said today, 'the Association was looking forward to conducting its 26th National Congress in Sydney from 27th till 29th May 2005.

The Association is conducting a Future Directions Forum a day prior to the Congress which will enhance discussions and debate during the event.

Mr McKenzie said; this years Congress will be discussing many issues of extreme importance to the Association's membership including Mental and Physical Health and Compensation issues affecting veterans and their families. Traditionally those of us who are sent in harms way in the defence of this Nation or called upon to restore peace to other Nations are well regarded and cared for by Government. Despite ongoing assurances that this would continue, our community is ever vigilant for attempts to categorise veterans in receipt of Compensation payments and Health care, as welfare recipients; he said.

Mr McKenzie said; one only has to look at the recent controversy over a Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry discussion paper, authored by Des Moore, to realise that there are individuals out there who have no understanding of the responsibility of the Australian community through Government and the Department of Veterans Affairs to properly care for those damaged by war. This Association was pleased that the Minister for Veterans Affairs De-Anne Kelly had responded in a positive manner to allay some fears expressed by ex-service organisations and the veteran community at large following the documents release, he said

Mr McKenzie said; that the Association was delighted that the committee looking at the feasibility of conducting a Health study for Sons and Daughters of Vietnam veterans was progressing well and we expect to receive an update from our representative at the Congress. The Association has been at the forefront in lobbying Government for the study for many years and we aim to ensure that it occurs for the benefit of our kids; he said.

The issue of aged care is a growing interest for our community with the average age of Vietnam veterans approaching fifty nine years, he said

Mr McKenzie said; the Association sincerely thanks our NSW Branch, Department of Veterans Affairs, St John of God Hospital Group, Mayo Hospital Taree, Ramsay Health Care, Burwood Press, AXA Financial Services, Wesley Mission Hospital, and the Rooty Hill RSL Club for their continued support.

The three-day Congress is being hosted by the VVAA, National Council, NSW Branch and will be conducted at the Holiday Inn Rooty Hill RSL, 'Cnr Sherbrooke and Railway Sts, Rooty Hill commencing at 8.30am on Friday 27 May 2005, with the official opening by the Minister for Veterans Affairs, the Hon De-Anne Kelly at 11am.

The Shadow Minister for Veterans Affairs, Senator Mark Bishop will also address the Congress following the opening