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INCORPORATED IN NSW

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WAR VETERANS TARGETED BY MEDIA REPORT

The National President of the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia, Brian McKenzie, said today 'that a recent report in the Melbourne Herald Sun on 5 January 2003 that insinuated that there was wide spread fraud and rorting of the compensation system by veterans was a fallacy and should be ignored.

Mr McKenzie said; the report quotes an unnamed doctor and sources close to the Department of Veterans Affairs but fails to define any clear source of the allegations and therefore no credence should be given to the claims at all.

The report also makes the point that the cost of caring for Australia's war veterans has blown out to more than \$8.8 billion.

Mr McKenzie said that the cost of looking after our veterans and their families damaged by the effects of war will continue to be an ongoing expense and needs to be factored in before any government commits troops to any future conflict.

Mr McKenzie said; it's particularly disturbing that these claims have surfaced ahead of a soon to be released report by Justice John Clarke and his committee into the 'Review into Veterans Entitlements'.

Mr McKenzie said; the veteran community are anxiously awaiting the report which will address issues of eligibility for entitlements and the inadequacy of compensation paid to our disabled veterans and their dependants.

Mr McKenzie said; with the dramatic demise of veterans from the First and Second World Wars, leaving smaller veteran groups, who served in smaller conflicts, we are now starting to become targets and fair game for the bean counters that seem to be focussed toward trimming the budget and denying veterans their rightful compensation and entitlements.

The Australian community has a long and valued record in meeting its moral obligations to ensure that our disabled veterans are looked after. Unfortunately, we have from time to time, those political opportunists who appear to delight in 'sinking the slipper in' to denigrate the very people who have put their 'lives on the line' on behalf of the Australian people at the whim of the government of the day, Mr McKenzie said

Mr McKenzie said; 'what we are seeing here is an attempt to vilify all veterans but for the sake of the probable actions of a few and I call on the people who are making these libellous and unsubstantiated allegations - to put up or shut up.

I suggest that the ill informed reporter and the nameless doctor should contact me or the Department Veterans Affairs with the evidence to substantiate their claims, Mr McKenzie said

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