

Vietnam Veterans' Mortality Study

Media Release - 30 April 1997

The Minister for Veterans' Affairs, the Hon Bruce Scott MP has today released the findings of the Vietnam Veterans' Mortality Study. This study has been strongly supported by the Vietnam Veterans' Association of Australia. The National Secretary of the VVAA, Mr Geoff Trevor-Hunt, has been a member of the Mortality Study Committee since its inception. The VVAA sees a number of valuable outcomes resulting from the study.

The first of these is clear recognition that Vietnam veterans suffer from a significantly greater risk of dying from cancers, ischaemic heart disease and suicide than the Australian male population. Deaths from all cancers are 21% greater, with prostate cancer 53% higher and lung cancer 29% above the general male population. Deaths from suicide are 21% higher.

There are far less deaths from endocrine, nutritional and metabolic diseases, as well as mental disorders and congenital abnormalities. This was to be expected, as the Vietnam veterans were selected on the basis of health and fitness.

The National President of the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia, Mr Clive Mitchell-Taylor said at today's launch that the results of this study mean little, unless they are used to direct the assets of the Department of Veterans Affairs towards the delivery of Health programs which will begin to address those specific problems. He said that there is a strong case for greater resources to be put into the Vietnam Veterans Counselling Service and the National Centre for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

The VVAA believes that the increased rate of deaths from cancer is a direct result of exposure to dioxins and this view is supported by recent US studies which indicate that exposure to dioxins increase the risk of **all** cancers by up to 20%! The Association calls for expansion of the current investigation into the genetic effects of Agent White into a fully funded and comprehensive review of the effects of all herbicides and pesticides used in this conflict. The Association would enthusiastically support such a study, conducted under the auspices of the Repatriation Medical Authority, with guidance from the Ex-service community.

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