



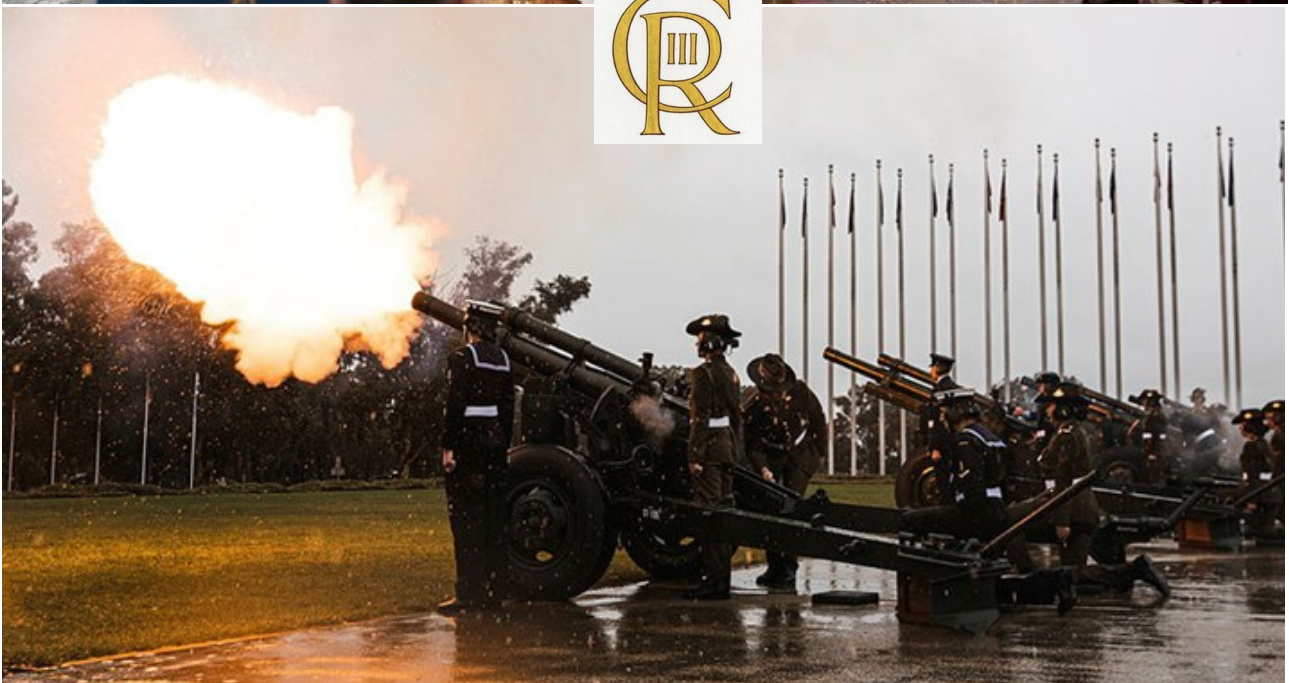
# *The Bosun's Call*



Vol 28 No 5

Once Navy, Always Navy

June 2023



## Events coming up

8 June Last Post Ceremony AWM Stoker Spencer Freeman HMAS Vampire  
27 June Last Post Ceremony AWM AB Graham Bennie HMAS Sydney II



Newsletter of the ACT Section of the  
**Naval Association of Australia**

## President's Message

Shipmates,

The National Executive (NX) and Section Presidents met in Canberra for the NAA National Council and AGM on Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> and Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2023. On the first day we received presentations on the ADF Transition (i.e., personnel making their way from Defence into the next phase of their life); AWM Redevelopment – progress report; DVA matters –Secretary and Departmental representatives; and, the Navy Bereavement Liaison Officer. All were most informative and well received; the present intention is to invite these presenters to attend the 2024 AGM (scheduled to be held in Canberra, in the May-June period). Much progress was made at the AGM with all motions being carried. The extent to which these matters were supported and, differing views deliberated upon, is indicative of the collaborative ethos within the entire National Council (NC).

I am most appreciative of the opportunity to serve another term as the National President and I thank all who continue to afford me their support and 'wise counsel'. It is a privilege and the duties and responsibilities are not to be taken lightly. I extend my congratulations to all who were nominated and duly elected to positions within the NX. We welcome a new member to the team, Wendy Lissing (ACT Section), to the position of Assistant National Secretary (ANS) and we extend our deepest appreciation to Pat McKay for her exemplary service in this role over many years. We wish her all the very best for the future and hope that she will take with her many happy recollections and, the sure knowledge that she made a very positive and highly valued contribution to the workings of the NX and the Association. Thank you Pat.

While Wendy will be so ably assisted by our outgoing National Secretary (NS), Russell Pettis, in an Administrator and Secretary Mentoring role over the forthcoming months, the search will continue for a NS with the prerequisite NAA experience and proficiencies. Please be assured, it is not anticipated there will be any tangible interruption to administrative matters within the NAA. Details as to interim measures will be advised at the earliest opportunity. Be assured, Russell's knowledge and experience will not be lost to the Association and advice will be provided in due course as to the timing of his relinquishing the duties as Administrator and ANS Mentor.

Any opportunity to be in the company of such dedicated and congenial NAA NC and NX members is to be embraced fully for there is so much to learn and to share in our respective and collective endeavours in support of all who choose to be in our Association. This was a most important and meaningful gathering wherein: the integral and long-standing ethos of egalitarianism within the NAA was affirmed 'in the written word'; our role and broader aspirations articulated; Association capabilities acknowledged and declared accordingly; measures put in place to meet the

## Naval Association of Australia

### ACT Section

**Founded 1 July 1944**

Patron The Hon Sir William Deane AC KBE

### Office Bearers 2023

President	David Manolas	0427 504 564
Vice President	Alex McGown	02 6258 6167
Secretary	<b>Alan Masters</b>	<b>02 6281 5630</b>
Treasurer	<b>Alan Masters</b>	<b>02 6281 5630</b>

### Committee Members

<b>Welfare</b>	<b>Alex McGown</b>	<b>02 6258 6167</b>
<b>Membership</b>	<b>Peter Cooke-Russell</b>	<b>0412 757 505</b>
	<b>John Small</b>	<b>02 6258 1216</b>
	<b>Tiger Lyons</b>	<b>02 6254 3453</b>
	<b>Alaric O'Neill</b>	
	<b>Joe Slaats</b>	
	<b>Stewart Gordon</b>	
<b>Editor BC</b>	<b>Peter Cooke-Russell</b>	<b>0412 757 505</b>
<b>Social Sec</b>	<b>Joe Slaats</b>	

### Contact Details

The President ACT Section  
0427 504 564  
stbdstayportgiveway@gmail.com

### The Secretary ACT Section

NAA ACT Section  
26 Nelson Place,  
CURTIN ACT 2605.

secretary.naa.act@gmail.com  
Tel 02 6281 5630

**Membership Registrar/BC Editor**  
peter.cookerussell@gmail.com

## General Meetings Dates and Locations Programme

1 Jun	Eastlakes Club Gungahlin	1330
3 Aug	Eastlakes Club Gungahlin	1330
7 Sep	Eastlakes Club Gungahlin	1330
5 Oct	Eastlakes Club Gungahlin	1330
2 Nov	Eastlakes Club Gungahlin	1330

## Committee meeting Eastlakes Gungahlin 1100 Thursday 1 June 2023

needs and processes confronting an ESO such as ours in today's world; and, measures necessary for our ongoing and future activities set in place. The process to have the AGM Minutes promulgated in a timely manner is in-hand.

Overall, a most decisive AGM. Well done to all who contributed and thank you, most sincerely.

David Manolas  
President  
NAA ACT Section



## Budget 2023-24 investments to support veterans and families

9 May 2023

The Australian Government is investing an additional \$328.1 million over four years to support the more than 340,000 veterans and dependants accessing services through DVA. This builds on the \$537.5 million invested in the October 2022 Budget as part of the Government's commitment to ensuring a better future for veterans and families.

The 2023-24 Federal Budget makes significant investments that will further reduce the veteran compensation claims backlog.

An investment of \$64.1 million in 2023-24 will retain over 480 DVA staff who are working to deliver frontline services to veterans and families and \$254.1 million over four years has been provided to modernise and sustain ageing IT systems to ensure more timely payments and access to services for veterans and families through DVA.

These investments support the Government's response to the interim recommendations of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.

Funding has been invested for technology upgrades at the Sir John Monash Centre, with \$7.4 million over four years (\$8.3 million over six years) to maintain cutting edge multi-media technology that gives visitors to the Centre an interactive and immersive experience of what our diggers went through during the First World War.

Other measures in the Budget 2023-24 package supporting health and wellbeing include:

- \$500,000 over four years to expand eligibility for the Acute Support Package introduced in the October 2022 Budget to include grandcarers – grandparents who are also full-time carers of children of veterans,
- \$2 million over two years to allow DVA to continue important mental health awareness and suicide intervention training for volunteers supporting veterans.

Additionally, there are a range of measures managed by other Australian Government departments that benefit veterans and families, from the [Department of Health and Aged Care](#) and from the [Department of Social Services](#).

For more information, visit the [www.dva.gov.au/budget2023-24](http://www.dva.gov.au/budget2023-24) on the DVA website.

### Cheaper medicines and boosting Medicare

Announced prior to the budget, Australians will have the ability to purchase two months' worth of medicine for the price of a single prescription. Effective 1 September 2023 this will save general patients up to \$180 a year if their medicine is able to be prescribed for 60 days, with concession card holders saving up to \$43.80 a year per individual medicine.

The government will also invest \$3.5 billion to triple the bulk billing incentive for pensioners and other Commonwealth concession card holders, to provide access to a greater number of bulk-billing GPs.

### Jobs and Skills Summit – encourage pensioners into workforce

This measure enables eligible pensioners above Age Pension age to earn more income before their pension reduces, by extending the temporary increase to the Work Bonus balance to 31 December 2023.

Eligible pensioners have had \$4,000 credited to their Work Bonus balance since 1 December 2022, increasing the maximum Work Bonus balance from \$7,800 to \$11,800. This measure extends the increase to 31 December 2023. The Work Bonus concession of \$300 per fortnight will stay the same.

Eligible pensioners now have until 31 December 2023 to use their bigger Work Bonus balance. Any Work Bonus balance above \$7,800 after 31 December 2023 will reset to \$7,800.

The Work Bonus reduces the amount of employment income that Services Australia applies to a pensioner's rate of entitlement under the income test. This includes eligible self-employment income. Read more about the [Work Bonus](#).

This measure is led by the Department of Social Services. Services Australia has been allocated \$681,000 in the 2023-24 financial year to support the extension of this measure.

Enabling legislation was passed in November 2022.

This measure is not subject to legislation passing.

### Who this measure affects

This affects people getting Age Pension, Disability Support Pension, or Carer Payment who are over Age Pension age. It also affects those on equivalent Veterans Entitlement Act Pensions.

### When this starts and finishes

This measure extends the measure that started on 1 December 2022. It will end on 31 December 2023.

### \$50,000 bonus if ADF personnel re-enlist for three years

In an effort to address a recruitment and retention crisis within the ADF, the government will offer approximately 3400 personnel a [\\$50,000 bonus](#) to re-enlist for an additional three years after their initial service period. The plan will cost \$400 million over the forward estimates. It comes after resignation rates hit a decade-high last year.

### EV chargers to tackle 'range anxiety'

The federal government's Driving the Nation Fund will provide \$39.3 million to [the NRMA](#), which will match the funds to build 117 fast electric vehicle chargers across Australia's national highways. The infrastructure will "make it possible to drive from Darwin to Perth, Broken Hill to Adelaide, and Brisbane to Tennant Creek" and help address "range anxiety" — a commonly cited barrier to purchasing electric vehicles.

**Vale**

## **Dean Francis Da Costa**

**14 February 1937—19 May 2023**

### **DVA - Claims processing times**

The average time taken to process is in calendar days. Claims will take a variety of times to complete based on whether or not the claim is prioritised for allocation to a decision maker and the complexity of the claim itself. For example, if the service of the individual crosses two or more Acts or contains a lot of health conditions and injuries or both. This results in some claims being decided faster than the average in the table below, while some claims take longer.

<b>Type of claim</b>	<b>Average number of days from lodgement to allocate to a decision maker</b>	<b>Average number of days between allocation to a decision maker and the decision being made</b>	<b>Average number of days between lodgement and the claim being decided</b>
MRCA Initial Liability	319	112	435
DRCA Initial Liability	243	190	449
VEA Disability Compensation Payment	236	211	468
MRCA Permanent Impairment	114	133	259
DRCA Permanent Impairment	92	146	251
MRCA and DRCA Incapacity Payments	27	66	98
War widow(er)'s pension	Not available	Not available	84

Source: Department of Veterans' Affairs, Veteran and Family Services Group

#### **What you can do**

For any condition, to make the claiming process smoother, follow these 3 steps:

Step 1: Get your medical practitioner to confirm your diagnosis.

Step 2: Supply the documents you need to.

Step 3: Check if you are already eligible for free health care and treatment



## Coronation Album



*Above: Petty Officer William Garlick from Australia's Federation Guard prior to a rehearsal for the Coronation.*

*Right: Lieutenant Daniel Cochrane on exchange to the RN was aircrew on one of the Merlin HM2 of 820 Squadron in the Coronation fly past*

*Below: Australia's Federation Guard members at Wellington Barracks prior to marching in the Coronation Procession of His Majesty The King on 06 May 2023*

Photos Defence





## Coronation Album



**Above:** RAAF Cpl Tegan Ross from Australia's Federation Guard with representatives from Commonwealth countries escorting the Gold State Coach

**Left:** Able Seaman Ben Goodwin (right) from Australia's Federation Guard and Master Sailor Lee from the Royal Canadian Navy; both submariners, prepare to march during the Coronation

**Below:** Australia's Federation Guard members march past Buckingham Palace, into position for His Majesty The King's Coronation Procession

**Front page:** The presence of the Australia Defence Force at the Coronation continues a tradition that began in 1911 with the coronation of His Majesty King George V. In Australia, Defence elements supported events marking the occasion including, on Sunday 7 May, a National 21 Gun Salute on the forecourt of Parliament House.

Photos: Defence





## Veterans' Legislation Reform Consultation Pathway ACT Section Submission extracts

### Covering Statement

**In response to the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) engaging with the ex-service community through the Ex-Service Organisation Round Table and other national and state and territory ex-service organisation forums, the ACT Section of the Naval Association forwards the attached paper in response to the Department's engagement with Ex-Service Organisations. The shortness of the time allowed for consultation with other Sections and Sub-sections of the NAA has precluded a fuller response.**

∞

As the Naval Association of Australia (NAA) highlighted in its submission to the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide (RCDVS),

*"...the [current] legislation is confusing even to those who deal with it regularly let alone sailors who are unfamiliar with the concepts and operations of the various legislation. A veteran may have a condition that is accepted as being service related by one Act but rejected by another. The confusion caused by this often results in increased stress to veterans with many veterans not receiving the benefits to which they are entitled because the confusion causes stress with many veterans declaring 'It's not worth the hassle.' Where the veteran becomes emotionally beaten by DVA It is often left to the volunteer advocate to convince the veteran that in the long term he or she should persevere with the claim."*

The NAA submission went on to give examples of the disparities between various pieces of veteran's legislation. The problems illustrated are a part the problem associated with the legislation and in part a problem with the Rules of Evidence associated with operational and non-operational service.

The NAA believes the time is well overdue for Veterans' legislative reform and welcomes the government initiative. As can be appreciated with any form of reform the announcement that the legislation is to be modified with the aim of producing one piece of legislation has been met with a mixture of relief, suspicion and distrust. Nevertheless, the NAA supports the spirit of legislative reform provided that past, current and future members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) are not disadvantaged in any way. The proposed legislative reform of veterans' legislation is of vital importance not only to past and current serving members of the ADF but will also affect future Defence personnel and their families.

∞

The NAA believes the focus of legislative reform should be on reducing the complexity of legislation

governing veterans' entitlements. These sentiments are in accord with the views expressed in the Productivity Report 'A Better Way to Support Veterans' (Volume 1, pages 2 and 3) and the RCDVS Interim Report ((Recommendation 1).

In addition, the NAA considers the veteran should always be afforded the benefit of the doubt in the claims process. This will reduce the stress and inequality in the system to the benefit of veterans and cost saving to the public.

∞

The NAA continues to advocate for beneficial legislation when dealing with claims from veterans and their families. We believe the double standards under which veterans are adjudged depending of their operational or non-operational service to be discriminatory and advocate that all veterans should be treated equal and the double standard be abolished.

∞

Currently the Veterans Review Board (VRB) forbids the representation of veterans by legal practitioners. A legal practitioner is defined under s 147 of the VEA as being a person who has a law degree, a legal studies degree or anyone who is licenced to practice as a solicitor or barrister in a State or Territory of Australia. A veteran can also have a lawyer assist in the drafting of the claim and a lawyer can be present at a VRB hearing but not as a veteran's representative.

Some argue the VRB is a tribunal without the formality of other legal proceedings and this is the justification for excluding lawyers from the VRB hearings. However, many of the members of the VRB are practicing lawyers or have some form of legal background. Therefore, the veteran is at a disadvantage even if appearing with an advocate. The ATDP system was designed in part to address this imbalance but it has not. Even senior advocates complain that they are at disadvantage.

∞

### **Deliberately withholding medical advice from veterans or their advocates – denial of Natural Justice**

A failure by Delegates as the Primary Decision-makers, to have regard to the beneficial applicants of all three Acts and considerable persuasive authority, indicates unprofessional decision making leading to an abuse of process and a denial of natural justice to the veteran.

The increasing practice by DVA to issue s.137 Reports (T-Documents) with no medical evidence included that is from a Departmental Medical Adviser (DMA), validating a Delegate's decision to refuse a

(Continued on page 8)

## Veterans' Legislation Reform Consultation Pathway ACT Section Submission extracts

(Continued from page 7)

claim is increasingly frustrating on veterans, their families and advocates. DVA delegates in reasons for rejection will state 'based on medical advice' but refuse to elaborate on that advice.

In a recent claim involving an ex-RAN officer, DVA rejected a claim citing a medical report and when asked by the advocate to provide a copy of the report, DVA said it had been lost. Following three further requests, the advocate had to lodge a formal complaint with the Regional Director NSW/ACT and suggest both a ministerial and a letter to the Australian Information Commissioner citing inadequate security of personal information may assist in a search for the delinquent report. The report was 'found' by DVA and a heavily redacted copy was provided.

It is arguable the Delegate's deliberate exclusion of a DMA's report is a tactic designed to disadvantage a veteran and cause him or her significant detriment. Furthermore, as this is not isolated it can only be described as a systemic trend supported by DVA hierarchy to disadvantage veterans and their families.

This practice as outlined above, is contrary to the principles of open/transparent government and is arguably in contravention of the Commonwealth's 'model litigant policy'. The concept of the Commonwealth as a 'model litigant' is not new, it was raised by Griffiths CJ in *Melbourne Steamship Co Ltd v Moorehead* [1912] HCA 69 where his Honour spoke about the Crown observing the principles of fair play when dealing with its subjects.

In the case of *Kelly v New Zealand Insurance Co* (1996) 130 FLR 97. Kirby J stated that the common law duty of "good faith" encompassed notions of:

fairness,  
reasonableness,  
standards of decency; and  
fair dealing.

The 'model litigant' policy is set out at Appendix B to the *Legal Services Directions* 2005 made under s 55ZF of the *Judiciary Act* 1903 (Cth) and promulgated by the Attorney-General's Department. The model litigant obligations are binding on all government agencies. One of the principles of the Model Litigant Policy is that the Commonwealth will not take advantage of a claimant who lacks the resources to litigate a legitimate claim.

The bad faith provision is also contained in the AD (JR) Act 1977 at s.6(2)(d) which furthermore, provides that any evidence of bad faith may be a breach of section 6(1) and 6(2) of the Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Act 1977.

∞

The NAA believes the withholding of information upon which a decision involving a veteran is based to be spiteful, unconscionable and is a denial of natural justice. It has caused and continues to cause additional stress on the veteran already experiencing mental trauma resulting from service and significant extra work on the part of the volunteer advocate.

In order to prevent the continuation of this practice, the NAA believes that within the new legislation provisions similar to 'discovery' in civil and family law should be introduced.

∞

### Statements of Principles (SOPs)

SOPs are determined by the Repatriation Medical Authority (RMA) and are legislative instruments. They have the same legal standing as any legislation passed by the Commonwealth Parliament. SOPs state what factors must exist to establish a causal connection between a particular disease, injury or death (termed a 'condition' or 'conditions') and the veterans' service.

SOPs are divided into those dealing with a condition sustained that can be linked to operational service and those that are linked to non-operational service. For example, a veteran with operational service will have his or her claimed condition determined under the Reasonable Hypothesis standard of proof whilst a veteran whose injury, illness or death was sustained whilst not on operational service will have his or her claim assessed under the more rigorous Balance of Probabilities standard of proof.

Whilst the SOPs provide a level of certainty in the submission and assessing of claims, there is increasing criticism that the use of Reasonable Hypothesis for operational conditions and Balance of Probabilities for non-operational conditions is discriminatory.

The NAA agrees with the evidence reportedly given by General Campbell to the RCDVS that there is no institutional, operational or military need for operational versus non-operational differential.

As argued earlier in this submission the NAA does not believe the service differential should continue with any new legislation but that the standard of proof should be the Reasonable Hypothesis standard. This we believe is in keeping with the recognised nature of service that veterans give to their country and the fact that defence service is often more hazardous to that in other professions.

∞

### Remunerative work hours

The current status of veterans who have been awarded a Special Rate (also known as a TPI)

(Continued on page 9)



## Veterans' Legislation Reform Consultation Pathway ACT Section Submission extracts

(Continued from page 8)

pension as outlined in section 24 of the VEA or a Special Rate Disability Pension (SRDP) under section 198 of the MRCA, is based in part on the capacity of veterans to undertake remunerative work for more than 8 hours per week (VEA) and 10 hrs remunerative work per week (MRCA). This discrimination is illogical.

The 10-hour rule imposed on MRCA veterans is clearly more generous than that currently in force for VEA TPI veterans. As such, it is considered that an inconsistency exists to the extent an unequal application of a policy for TPI/SRDP veterans, exists.

Both categories of veterans are entitled to equal benefits and rates of pension payment. It follows that, this should also apply to equality of the capacity to undertake remunerative work. It is considered to be cost-neutral to the Government. The NAA supports a ten hour per week remuneration for Special Rate and Special Rate Disability Pension recipients.

### Henry VIII Clause

The NAA considers the ADF-specific compensation legislation contained in section 121B of the DRCA, commonly known as the Henry VIII clause (see note), to be a welcome and significant inclusion in the legislation and should be included in the proposed MRCA. The clause states:

#### **121B Regulations modifying the operation of this Act**

- (1) *The regulations may modify the operation of this Act.*
- (2) *Before the Governor-General makes regulations under subsection (1), the Minister must be satisfied that it is necessary or desirable to make the regulations to ensure that no person (except the Commonwealth) is disadvantaged by the enactment of this Act.*

∞

### Conclusion

As expressed earlier the NAA welcomes the initiative to bring veterans' legislation under one consolidated Act. However, the NAA cautions against the parsimony of government in using this as an exercise to save money at veterans' expense or the detriment of their families.

There are many more issues that will need to be clarified before a final document is placed before the parliament and because of this the NAA sees a lot of work to be done beforehand.

The NAA is willing to assist in any way it can to improve the current system that will benefit both the government and the veteran community.

### Recommendations

The NAA recommends the following:

- The concept that an injury is an injury regardless of whether it occurred on operational or non-operational service. To treat them differently for repatriation or compensation purposes is discriminatory.
- The grandfathering of current into future legislation to ensure that no one is disadvantaged by the harmonisation.
- Offsetting arrangements be simplified. With one piece of legislation the NAA believes this sore point will be eliminated.
- Veterans wishing to have legal representation at VRBs should be allowed to do so.
- Withholding of information by DVA from veterans be addressed as a matter of urgency and stopped. Any withholding in the future to be considered as a contempt of the process.
- Remunerative work hours for those on the special rate (VEA) or the SRDP (MRCA) be standardized to at least 10 hours paid work per week.
- The Henry VIII clause to remain in the new legislation.
- Veterans and their families should not be disadvantaged with any Legislation Reform.
- SOPs should be amended to reflect there is no service differential and that all claims are to be assessed by DVA according to the Reasonable Hypothesis circumstances.

NAVAL ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

ACT SECTION

8 May 2023

#### *Note*

*Henry VIII clause is the term given to a provision in a primary Act which gives the power for secondary legislation (regulations) to include provisions which amend, repeal or are inconsistent with the primary legislation. The effect of a Henry VIII clause is that whoever makes the regulations has been delegated legislative power by the Parliament. In other words, the executive arm of government would have the power to make regulations which can modify the application of the primary statute. The original Henry VIII clause was contained in the Statute of Sewers in 1531, which gave the Commissioner of Sewers powers to make rules which had the force of legislation (legislative power), powers to impose taxation rates and powers to impose penalties for non-compliance. A later Statute of Proclamations (1539) allowed the King to issue proclamations which had the force of an Act of Parliament. Both these were passed during the time of Henry VIII.*

## Change of Command—HMAS Canberra



Above: Outgoing Commanding Officer HMAS Canberra, Captain Jace Hutchison, RAN, hands over the weight of command of HMAS Canberra in the form of a nautical telescope to incoming Commanding Officer HMAS Canberra, Captain Brendan O'Hara, RAN

Right and below: Ship's company of HMAS Canberra gather on the flight deck to cheer ship to outgoing Commanding Officer HMAS Canberra, Captain Jace Hutchison, RAN,

Photo LSIS Matthew Lyall





## Naval Association of Australia National Conference 17 May 2023

Extracts from Secretary, Department of Veterans' Affairs. Alison Frame's presentation

### Priorities

- Eliminating the claims backlog
- Reforming veteran legislation
- Modernising information technology
- Planning for the future

### Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide

- DVA welcomes the Royal Commission as an opportunity to learn and strengthen its approach to support the mental health and welfare of our veterans and families
- \$354.8 million over four years was invested to address recommendations 1-4 in the October

### 2022-23 Budget

#### Eliminating claims backlog

- \$233 million already invested by the Australian Government
- 500 additional frontline staff
- 2023-24 Federal Budget investment of \$64.1 million to maintain skilled workforce

#### Modernisation and Sustainment of ICT systems

\$254.1 million over four years to replace DVA's financial management system and sustain DVA's existing ICT systems

- A modern and reliable payments system is required to ensure delivery of services and support across the broader veteran support system
- Modernisation will help to improve the experience for veterans and families by reducing the complexity of the claims system

#### Supporting Veterans – Volunteer Training in Suicide Recognition and Intervention

\$2 million over two years to support the continued delivery of mental health literacy and suicide intervention training

- A national series of workshops and training sessions for the ex-service community
- This training provides the veteran community with the skills and knowledge needed to: recognise those at risk of suicide
- provide support and intervention
- enable the connection to mental health support

#### Supporting Veteran Families at Risk

\$0.5 million over four years to expand eligibility for the Acute Support Package

- The eligibility for the Acute Support Package will be expanded to include grandparents

who are full-time carers for children of veterans

- The Acute Support Package is designed to support families who are experiencing new and challenging life circumstances to get back on track

### Cross-portfolio measures – Department of Health and Aged Care

#### Supporting Bulk Billing in General Practice (Veterans' Access Payment)

- \$33.3 million for DVA over four years
- This measure triples the current bulk billing incentive – and the corresponding Veterans' Access Payment - for certain GP attendances, from 1 November 2023
- The increased VAP payment will also apply to some telehealth services, for veterans registered with MyMedicare
- For Veteran Card holders, this means the amount paid to their GP for some of the most common attendances will increase

#### MyMedicare (voluntary patient registration)

- Patients will be able to get continuity of care from a team of health care providers through a new voluntary patient registration payment model –MyMedicare
- MyMedicare will build a stronger relationship between patients and their primary care teams. It is voluntary and open to anyone, including veterans, with patients able to register with their preferred practice, GP and care team. It will support access to longer GP telehealth consultations

#### Urgent Care Clinics

- Urgent Care Clinics will take pressure off hospital emergency departments by making it easier for Australians to see a doctor or nurse when they have an urgent, but not life threatening need for care, at no cost to individuals
- This measure provides additional funding of \$2 million for DVA to support the full rollout of an expanded national network of Urgent Care Clinics
- Veterans and eligible dependents will be able to access urgent care at these clinics using their Veteran Card

### Ex-Service Organisations Round Table (ESORT)

- No changes at the present time
- A National Consultation Framework Review will be undertaken later in the year
- We are currently preparing a DVA Veteran and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

## New directions in Personnel Management

Alison Frame commenced as Secretary of the Department of Veteran's Affairs in January 2023.

Prior to this Alison was Deputy Secretary, Social Policy in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet from August 2020. This work included leading the partnerships between the Commonwealth and state and territory jurisdictions on delivering social policy and services outcomes for all Australians. A key priority was providing sustained leadership and coordination across government to manage Australia's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Alison has led social policy initiatives and reform across both the Commonwealth and the NSW governments as a senior executive for over 16 years. Most recently in the NSW Government as Group Deputy Secretary, Property and Housing, Alison was responsible for nine housing and property agencies, including Crown Lands, Property NSW and Land and Housing Corporation.

During her time in other NSW Government senior leadership roles Alison led reforms on child protection, domestic violence, Indigenous policy, disability policy, housing and planning and Governance.

Prior to this, in the APS, Alison worked in a number of social policy roles, including First Assistant

### Ms Alison Frame



Secretary, Policy and Strategy, Department of Human Services.

Alison holds a Bachelor of Speech-language Pathology and a Bachelor of Political Science from the University of Queensland and a Master of Public Administration from the London School of Economics and Political Science.

### Major General Natasha Fox AM CSC



The Defence Strategic Review, released last month, recommended ADF personnel management be centralised into a single integrated system incorporating the five domains, headed by a Chief of Personnel reporting directly to the Chief of the Defence Force.

Deputy Chief of Army Major General Natasha Fox has been appointed the inaugural Chief of Personnel in the Australian Defence Force

Major General Natasha Fox entered the Australian Defence Force Academy in 1988 and graduated

from the Royal Military College in 1991. Her early foundation appointments were in logistics specialising in combat supplies and logistics planning, and in training positions culminating with her being the Commanding Officer/Chief Instructor at the Australian Defence Force Academy for which she received a Conspicuous Service Cross.

Major General Fox has been employed across the Australian Defence Force in Forces Command, Joint Logistics Command, Special Operations Command, Training Command - Army, and Defence People Group. She has deployed to Lebanon, Syria, and Israel and was the Chief of Staff for Joint Task Force 633 in the Middle East where she was appointed a member of the Order of Australia (AM) for her service.

Major General Fox is a graduate of the Australian Command and Staff College, and the Defence and Strategic Studies Course. She has completed numerous degrees including Masters of Business Administration, Master of Politics and Policy, and Masters of Management in Defence Studies. She is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, the Lee Kwan Yew School of Public Policy (Singapore), The Wharton School (University of Pennsylvania), and The Said Business School (Oxford University).

Major General Fox was appointed Deputy Chief of Army on 2nd February 2022.

Major General Fox is married to Commodore Andrew Willis, MVO, RAN and has two teenage boys that keep her busy



## How Centrelink assesses your relationship status

4 May 2023

If you wish to give advice to somebody who needs to know the current rules on the Centrelink pension system the following article will be of use.

If you want to receive a pension, the government has a right to know if you are single or one of a couple.

The status of one's relationship is usually regarded as private and no one else's business. However, that's not so when it comes to the government, which reserves the right to stick its nose into other people's business when it comes to distributing taxpayer funded payments such as the Age Pension.

Whether you are a single or a couple can affect every aspect of your entitlements, including:

- If you get a payment.
- Which type of payment that might be.
- How much you will receive.

Centrelink's view of your relationship will determine whether you are paid a single or couples rate of pension (if you're eligible). It will also determine which income and asset thresholds you are tested against and therefore the rate you will be paid.

Being a couple is defined as: being married, in a registered relationship, or in a de facto relationship.

Centrelink does not stipulate how long a relationship should be to be classified de facto. However, it does say that a de facto relationship is where you and your partner meet all of these conditions:

- You're in a relationship similar to a married couple.
- You're not married or in a registered relationship.
- You're over the age of consent in the state or territory where you live.
- You're not in a prohibited relationship under section 4(12) and section 4(13) of the Social Security Act 1991 (which specify a limited number of special circumstances).

Being in a de facto relationship can influence what payments you can get and your payment rate.

If you have a boyfriend or girlfriend or are in a non-binary relationship, you may be considered as being in a de facto relationship.

If your relationship is classed as de facto, it means you're a member of a couple, and you need to tell Centrelink about the other person.

Centrelink says it may need to [assess your relationship](#) to decide if you're a member of a couple and ensure the correct payments are made.

### Are you a couple?

To determine this, Centrelink considers the following:

- Financial aspects of the relationship. If there is one person providing financial support for the other. This also covers things such as joint accounts, debts or assets.
- The nature of your household. The physical set-up of the household such as shared quarters, arrangements for domestic tasks, and joint care of children.
- Social aspects of the relationship. How you present yourselves to society and how others in society view your relationship.
- If you have a sexual relationship. However, the presence or absence of a sexual relationship does not by itself determine whether you're a member of a couple.
- The nature of your commitment to each other. This relates to companionship, emotional support, and length of the relationship.

Centrelink says you can be a member of a couple even if none of the above apply.

Bear in mind that if you tell Centrelink you are a member of a couple, they don't usually assess your relationship against these things. But they may look at them if your circumstances change

### Separation

Those in a relationship who then separate are considered to have become singles if there has been a physical and emotional separation.

Separation includes partners who separate but continue to live in the same house, in which case a "separated under one roof" declaration is required from each person.

Former couples will need to have their situation regularly reviewed by Centrelink to ensure the correct amount is being paid.

Singles who share housing may also need to submit a "relationship details form".

### Services Australia

We deliver government payments and services

### Making it official

Your relationship can be official in a few ways. Your relationship may be de facto, registered or married. You may need to confirm your relationship status with us.

If you have a partner we consider you a member of a couple.

You'll need to let us know if you become partnered. This is so we can pay you the right amount.

*(Continued on page 14)*

## How Centrelink assesses your relationship status

(Continued from page 13)

If you or your partner are making a claim for a payment, you'll need to [confirm your relationship status](#) with us.

We assess relationship types as married, registered or de facto.

### **De facto relationship**

A de facto relationship is where you and your partner meet all of these conditions:

- you're in a relationship similar to a married couple
- you're not married or in a registered relationship
- you're over the age of consent in the state or territory you live in
- you're not in a prohibited relationship under [section 4\(12\) and section 4\(13\) of the Social Security Act 1991](#).

Being in a de facto relationship can have an effect on what payments you can get and your payment rate.

There's no minimum time period for a relationship to be de facto.

There are different relationship rules for ABSTUDY Living Allowance, Youth Allowance and Disability Support Pension.

When you tell us about your relationship change, it can help us determine if you're independent for these payments. This may affect your rate of payment.

If you get one of these payments and you're dependent, we don't consider you as a member of a couple.

Read more about the independent and dependent rules for:

### **Boyfriends, girlfriends and non-binary relationships**

If you have a boyfriend, girlfriend or are in a non-binary relationship, we may consider you as being in a de facto relationship.

If we assess your relationship type as de facto, it means you're a member of a couple.

You need to tell us about your boyfriend, girlfriend or non-binary relationship. We may need to [assess your relationship](#) to decide if you're a member of a couple. This is so we pay you the right amount.

### **Registered relationship**

One way to make your relationship official is to register it in your state or territory.

Read about how to register your relationship in your state or territory. You can't do this in the Northern Territory or Western Australia.

### **Definition.**

*Nonbinary is a term that describes someone who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Instead, a nonbinary person may define their gender identity and experience outside of these binary terms.*

*The term nonbinary can describe several different concepts, and people often use it interchangeably with terms such as agender, androgynous, and genderqueer. This can create confusion over what these terms mean and how a person can use them.*

## Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits Act 1973 No. 81 of 1973 - Sect 125

### **Part VI-Benefits of Death of Member of Scheme**

#### **Division 1-Widows' Pensions**

38. Where a member of the scheme who is a contributing member dies before retirement and is survived by a widow, the widow is entitled to a pension at a rate equal to five-eighths of the rate at which invalidity pay would have been payable to the deceased member if, on the date of his death, he had become entitled to invalidity benefit and had been classified as Class A under section 30.

#### **Widow's pension on death of recipient member.**

39. Where a member of the scheme who is a recipient member dies and is survived by a widow, then, subject to sections 47 and 75, the widow is entitled to a pension at a rate equal to five-eighths of the rate at which retirement pay or invalidity pay was payable to the deceased member immediately before his death or, if the member had commuted a portion of his retirement pay under section 24, at a

rate equal to five-eighths of the rate at which retirement pay would have been payable to the member immediately before his death if he had not so commuted a portion of his [retirement pay](#).

#### **Death after retirement**

If you die after retirement, your spouse's benefit will be paid at the rate of 62.5% (five-eighths) of the benefit you were receiving at the time of your death, disregarding any previous commutation reduction. However, for the first seven paydays following your death, your spouse will be paid at the same rate you were receiving at the time of your death, before changing to the spouse's rate. It is the age of your eligible spouse on or after 1 July 2014, not the age you would have been, that dictates which method of indexation is to be applied to the notional rate of retirement pay for eligible spouse's pensions from your date of death or 1 July 2014, whichever is later. Advising your depend



## DFRDB Act 1973—Death Benefits

General Your DFRDB membership not only provides you with a superannuation benefit for your retirement, but it also guarantees a benefit for your eligible dependants or your estate in the event of your death. The eligibility criteria is set out in the DFRDB Act. We will decide whether or not your dependants satisfy the conditions in the Act and qualify for the payment of a benefit.

Your dependants may also be entitled to claim benefits from DVA or under the Social Security Act in addition to those from DFRDB.

Who is eligible? In the event of your death, benefits are payable to the spouse and child/ren (including orphans) of deceased members of DFRDB, and differ according to whether you die in service or after you retire.

Examples of how these benefits are calculated and the eligibility requirements that need to be satisfied are explained on the next page

### Death after retirement

If you die after retirement, your spouse's benefit will be paid at the rate of 62.5% (five-eighths) of the benefit you were receiving at the time of your death, disregarding any previous commutation reduction. However, for the first seven paydays following your death, your spouse will be paid at the same rate you were receiving at the time of your death, before changing to the spouse's rate.

It is the age of your eligible spouse on or after 1 July 2014, not the age you would have been, that dictates which method of indexation is to be applied to the notional rate of retirement pay for eligible spouse's pensions from your date of death or 1 July 2014, whichever is later. Advising your dependants It is important that your dependants are aware that a benefit may be payable from DFRDB in the event of your death.

### Spouse benefits

Generally, DFRDB pays benefits to an eligible spouse upon the death of a DFRDB member or pensioner. The eligibility requirements are as follows:

- you must be a DFRDB member or pensioner
- your spouse must be in a marital or couple relationship with you at the time of your death
- the marital or couple relationship must have existed for a continuous period of at least three years immediately before your death.

For the purposes of DFRDB, a marital or couple relationship will exist if another person has been living with you as your husband, wife or partner (including a same sex partner) in a permanent and bona fide domestic basis at the time of your death.

If the marital or couple relationship existed for a continuous period of less than three years at the time of your death, your spouse may still be eligible for a spouse's benefit, at our discretion.

From 1 January 2008, if after becoming a pensioner you commence a marital or couple relationship after

your sixtieth birthday, that relationship must exist for at least three years for your spouse to be eligible for a full spouse's benefit. Relationships of less than three years will result in a pro-rata reduction in the pension payable.

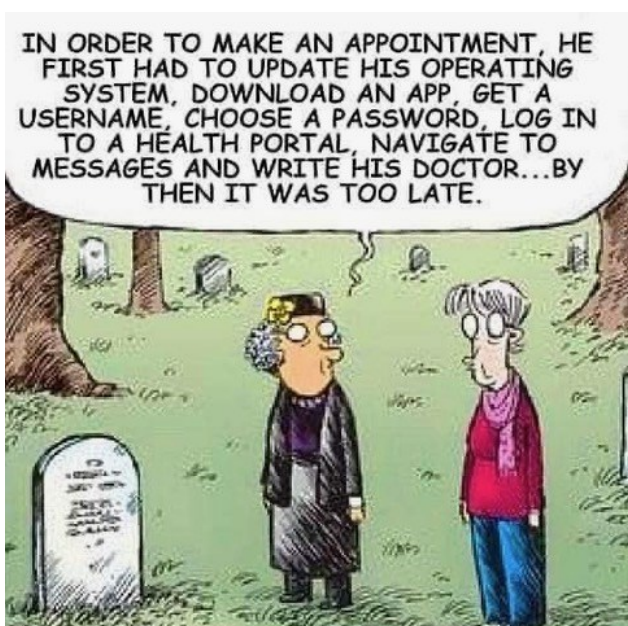
The final category of eligibility for spouses concerns a situation where you are legally married or in a registered relationship, but you are not living in a marital or couple relationship at the time of your death. To receive a spouse's benefit in these circumstances, your husband, wife or partner will have to prove to us that they were wholly or substantially financially dependent on you at the time of your death.

Where two surviving spouses meet the criteria for eligibility for benefits—for example, a dependent legal spouse and a dependent de facto spouse—the benefit will be apportioned at the rate of a minimum of 37.5% of the total benefit to each spouse, with the remaining portion allocated at our discretion, which will have regard to the financial needs of each of the spouses. In these circumstances, the total of the two pensions cannot exceed the total of the pension that would have been payable if there had only been one eligible spouse.

#### Note:

*It is a common misconception that spouses lose their eligibility and have their benefits stopped if their circumstances change. However, you can be assured that once we decide that your spouse is eligible to receive a benefit, then they will get that benefit for life and it will not be stopped under any normal circumstances (for example, in the event your spouse commences a new relationship). Since 1 January 2008 widows whose pensions previously ceased upon remarriage may request that the pension be reinstated prospectively at the rate it would now be payable had it not ceased*

<https://csc.sitecorecontenthub.cloud/api/public/content>



## Minutes of NAA (ACT) General Meeting held at the Eastlakes Gungahlin Club on 4 May 2023

**Meeting** started at 1335 with the Odes recited by David Manolas. Members paid respect to Robert McDonnell who crossed the bar on 12 April 2023.

**Present:** 12 members and one visitor as per attendance book.

**Apologies:** Mike Hardwick, Alaric O'Neill, Stewart Gordon, Tony Vickers, Bev Joce

**Minute of Last Meeting.** The minutes of the General meeting on 6 April appeared in the May 2023 edition of the Bosun's Call

*Motion: The minutes of the General Meeting held on 6 April 2023 be accepted.*

*Moved: Joe Slaats Seconded: Dennis Lyons Carried.*

**Business arising from the Minutes.** Nil  
**Reports.**

**President.** The President advised his General Meeting input would cover his activities.

**Vice President.** There will be Last Post services in June on 5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>. Volunteers are sought to lay the Section wreath. Names to the Secretary please.

**Secretary.** Business as usual.

**Treasurer.** The donations to our nominated charities impacted on our bank balance but members can be assured the Section remains in a healthy financial state.

**Membership.** Numbers remain static. CAPT Kevin Quarderer USN, Naval Attache to the USA Embassy has accepted our offer of Honorary Membership.

**Welfare.** John Small is recovering well from his stroke.

*Motion: The reports be received.*

*Moved: Darren Rush Seconded: Harry Beardsell. Carried.*

### General Business:

**ANZAC Day.** The President laid a wreath at the Last Post ceremony. He led the Section's contingent at the morning March in which he was supported by five other marchers. The Director of the AWM assured him that next year the forecourt of the AWM would be ready for the March.

**81<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of battle of the Coral Sea.** The President will lay a wreath at the service conducted at the AWM.

**Commemorative Medallion and Certificate for 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of end of Vietnam War.** Members are advised that DVA are offering Vietnam veterans a commemorative medallion

and certificate. Details on how to apply for such are available on the DVA website. The medallion is different to the one obtainable from the Military Shop in Fyshwick.

**National Conference.** This will be held in the Tradies in Dickson on 17/18 May 2023. At the AGM our member, Wendy Lissing, will be nominated for the Assistant Secretary role. Her nomination was fully supported by members present. Changes to the Constitution have been proposed and will be voted on. These changes were discussed at our November 2022 meeting and members endorsed that there be no changes to our agreed position at that time.

**DVA Harmonisation of the 3 Acts.** This process is trying to simplify entitlements and benefits available to veterans and replace the three separate Acts with a single ACT. Contradictions to entitlements appear in the present three separate Acts. DVA invited the veteran community to provide input to the process. A submission is to be forwarded by the Section to DVA with major input coming from shipmates, Allan Joyce, Alex McGown and Peter Cooke-Russell.

**Meeting Closed.** There being no other business the President closed the meeting at 1420.

Next meeting will be on Thursday, 1 June 2023 at 1330 at the Eastlake Football Club Gungahlin.

Alan Masters  
Secretary  
NAA ACT Section

### Notes from the Committee Meeting 4 May 2023

**Present:** David Manolas, Alex McGown, Peter Cooke-Russell, Dennis Lyons, Joe Slaats, Alan Masters.

Discussion focused on the upcoming agenda items for the General Meeting.

**Next Meeting.** The next meeting will be at the Eastlakes Gungahlin Club on 1 June 2023 at 1100.

Alan Masters  
Secretary  
NAA (ACT)



**MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS38 for 2023**

Action to renew membership for 2023 can now undertaken in a number of different ways. The following, in order of preference for the Treasurer, are listed below, but any of them can be utilised.

The use of e-banking provides for ease of payment and your bank records act as your receipt. The annual subscription for 2023 is \$38.

1. **Direct transfer of funds to the NAA (ACT Section).** Using e-bank facilities, transfer funds to Naval Association of Australia –ACT Section Account **BSB: 633 000 . Account Number 162 834 097 Please ensure you have identified yourself as the payer in order that the Treasurer can correctly credit your payment.**
2. Payment using the mail system. Please do not send cash through the mail system. Cheques can be forwarded to Membership Registrar, 4 McEachern Crescent, MELBA ACT 2615. Receipts will NOT be mailed to payers.
3. Direct payment to Treasurer. The Treasurer will gladly accept cheques or cash from members at General Meetings. A receipt will be given to payers.

IF YOU HAVE CHANGED ANY OF YOUR CONTACT DETAILS SUCH AS HOME ADDRESS, E-MAIL ADDRESS, TELEPHONE NUMBERS PLEASE ADVISE THE MEMBERSHIP REGISTRAR.

### *Social Program*

Fish 'n Chips is on the program, Snapper has reopened . .

1 Jun	Lunch Eaastlakes Gungahlin 1200
15 Jun	Fish 'n Chips CYC 1200
<b>6 Jul</b>	<b>Christmas in July Lunch</b>
20 Jul	Fish 'n Chips CYC 1200
3 Aug	Lunch Eastlakes Gungahlin 1200
17 Aug	Fish 'n Chips CYC 1200
7 Sep	Lunch Eastlakes Gungahlin 1200
21 Sep	Fish 'n Chips CYC 1200
5 Oct	Lunch Eastlakes Gungahlin 1200
19 Oct	Fish 'n Chips CYC 1200
2 Nov	Lunch Eastlakes Gungahlin 1200
16 Nov	Fish 'n Chips CYC 1200
<b>7 Dec</b>	<b>Christmas Lunch</b>

**Social Secretary**  
**Joe Slaats**

**DVA CONTACTS**

Information on health services may be obtained from DVA. The contact numbers for health care providers requiring further information or prior financial authorisation for all States & Territories are listed below:

**PHONE NUMBER:**

Telephone:  
1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)

International callers:

+61 2 6289 1133

**POSTAL ADDRESS FOR ALL STATES AND TERRITORIES:**

Health Approvals & Home Care Section epartment of Veterans' Affairs

GPO Box 9998

BRISBANE QLD 4001

**DVA WEBSITE:**

<http://www.dva.gov.au/providers/allied-healthprofessionals>

DVA email for prior financial authorisation:  
[health.approval@dva.gov.au](mailto:health.approval@dva.gov.au)

The appropriate prior approval request form can be found at: <https://www.dva.gov.au/providers/servicesrequiring-prior-approval>

**CLAIMS FOR PAYMENT**

For information about claims for payment visit:  
[www.dva.gov.au/providers/how-claim](http://www.dva.gov.au/providers/how-claim)



**HAPPY BIRTHDAY**

**A Happy Birthday to you**  
**June 2023**

Peter Gillan

Raymond Horne

Peter McNay



If undeliverable return to  
NAA ACT Section  
26 Nelson Place  
CURTIN ACT 2605

**POSTAGE**  
**PAID**  
**AUSTRALIA**

Paste Address label Here

The Bosun's Call Vol 28 No 5