

MEDIA RELEASE

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Troops Urged to Consider Future Health

Troops recently deployed to places like the Solomon Islands, East Timor and the Middle East should act now to reduce their risk of future health problems.

That is the message delivered by a group of war veterans and academics who recently gathered to discuss the Defence-funded Deployment Health Surveillance Program (DHSP).

Queensland's Kindred Organisations Committee, a group of state representatives from associations such as the Returned & Services League of Australia and Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia, met with program researchers from the Centre for Military and Veterans' Health in June.

The Deployment Health Surveillance Program aims to examine the physical, emotional and environmental effects of overseas deployment in order to better manage the health care needs of current and future veterans.

Researchers are currently surveying personnel deployed to the Solomon Islands between July 2003 and December 2005 and will soon launch studies into troops deployed to Bougainville and East Timor.

According to Head of the DHSP Scientific Research Team Professor Annette Dobson, participation in the studies is by invitation, voluntary and by a range of methods including online.

"By taking part, respondents not only assist us to develop better ways of measuring occupational and environmental exposures of deployment, they also help us to identify health issues early on and potentially prevent chronic disorders for themselves and their fellow troops," she said.

According to Professor Dobson, one issue already highlighted by the study is the dispersion amongst younger veterans.

"Researchers have found it difficult to track down some returned service personnel, particularly if they have since left the forces. It seems that between leaving the Australian Defence Force and seeking support, if required, from the Department of Veterans' Affairs, many are flying under the radar."

Kel Ryan, Kindred Organisations Committee Chairman and Deputy State President of the Queensland branch of the RSL, agreed that it can be hard to monitor returned troops.

"Many of the younger returned personnel in particular do not identify as being 'veterans' and do not associate with established ex-services organisations until later in life," he said.

"When it comes to planning for their future however, we would urge all younger veterans to consider projects such as the DHSP."



According to CMVH Director Professor Niki Ellis, the Centre will now host the quarterly meetings of the Kindred Organisations Committee and values the opportunity to discuss its ongoing work program with members.

“CMVH is committed to engaging with the veteran community to ensure its work is relevant and informed,” she said.

The Centre for Military and Veterans’ Health is a consortium led by The University of Queensland, in partnership with University of Adelaide and Charles Darwin University, and funded by the Australian Government through the Departments of Veterans’ Affairs and Defence. It is dedicated to providing innovative solutions to military and veterans’ health issues through research, education, e-Health and public debate.

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