

President's Report 2-2020

Petition to the House: The response by members to this all-important issue has slowed considerably. Even though the pen/paper version was declared redundant by the COVID 19 Pandemic, other means of contributing have been made available, via our Association website.

Thanks to Steve Mika, the Association A/Treasurer, and his tech savvy grand-daughter, we now have an Online Petition up and running. There is now no valid reason for members not to contribute to this Petition.

Hard copies of the Petition were sent to each person, and return address details were given as an addendum to the last GFL. So, for those without access to a computer, five minutes, sign, and send by mail, is all that is required.

Online Petition details are as follows: <https://www.gopetition.com/petitions/agent-orange-exposure.html>

Those with access to like-minded ex-service organisations are encouraged to approach these people and explain the purpose of the Petition. It's not too much to ask, and it's for the benefit of those of us with Vietnam service. A phone call may make all the difference.

On 12 March 2020, before self-distancing came into force, I was invited to give a presentation to the Outer Eastern Metropolitan Vietnam Veterans, who have since placed the details above in an email to its members with a request that members contribute to this issue. I have also been assured of their continuing support seeing as it does affect ALL Vietnam Veterans.

Similar support has been forthcoming from the much younger generation of HMAS Sydney sailors. The same can also be said for certain members of CDT 3, those who served as EMU's with RANHFV, my Education Team compatriots, and certain well-placed members of the Victorian VVAA.

The only disappointment thus far, is the complete and stony silence from those representing the South Vietnamese ex-service community, which is strange, as I thought they would be quite supportive as they could benefit as well.

The longer we take to challenge the system, the longer it will be before anything tangible is done. Numbers count. Politicians only take notice when the numbers cry out for attention.

As a reminder, 15 diseases are recognised at the moment by the DVA in the United States as having a connection to exposure to Agent Orange (AO) with their listings looking like going to 18, if recent studies published by the National

Academy of Sciences in 2018 are anything to go by. The new edition of their publication, Veterans and Agent Orange is due this year 2020. There is nothing similar in Australia, yet Australian studies are included in all editions of Veterans and Agent Orange which have been published biannually since 1994.

Whereas we in Australia are languishing on seven (7). Seven is the number of diseases that our DVA recognise may be contributed to, or caused by, the potable water Factor. This Factor not only includes sailors, but those who served ashore, and those who were transported by sea, to and from Vietnam.

This is an issue that needs to be seen all the way through. To that end, I will continue to push for a positive resolution before to many more of our generation leave this mortal coil, way before their time. Both Steve and I can only achieve this on your behalf if I have your unconditional support.

It is my intention to step down as President at the next AGM, whenever that might be. However, as in the past, I will continue with my research into this issue, and other factors affecting former sailors. I am always available to assist with research into service on an as required basis. It is also my intention to remain on the Committee as long as I'm able.

I am what is known in medical terms as 'auto immune deficient' which makes mixing with crowds during times - such as we all now find ourselves in - very dangerous. It's not quite what I expected. But there you have it. I am still warm, upright and lucid, and have wonderful family support.

Keep well, keep safe.

Sincerely,

Dr John R Carroll PhD, EdD, PhD (Monash)

President, HMAS Sydney Assoc. (Inc. Vic.)