

# RSL WODEN VALLEY SUB-BRANCH



Current Items of Interest

27 January 2022



Check out these awesome late night shots of Australian Army CH-47 helicopters lining the flight deck of HMAS Adelaide III as the ship prepared to depart the Port of Brisbane and sail for Tonga.

From the Royal Australian Navy Facebook page

## RATS NOW AVAILABLE TO DVA CARD HOLDERS

As you are no doubt aware, the government's Rapid Antigen Test Program started on Monday this week whereby those with a valid DVA card, among other cards, are entitled to FIVE free RAT kits from a participating pharmacy. We have received advice from Chemist Warehouse that they have a supply of RAT kits and would like to make them available to veterans who are entitled to receive the free offer. If you wish to avail yourself of this offer, please visit the Chemist Warehouse store at Woden to claim your free kits.

Regards,  
Greg

Greg Kennett  
Secretary



Congratulations to the Remount family for acknowledgment at Australia Day ceremony. The Yass Valley Council presented the team with “Community Group of the Year”. Literally thousands of hours of work supporting those people who have served our nation.



## **FRED SMITH WELCOME CONCERT AT THE PLAYHOUSE TO AID RECENTLY ARRIVED AFGHAN REFUGEES**

**Thursday 17 February 2022  
7.30pm**

Fred Smith will be presenting a special concert to welcome to Canberra recent evacuees from Afghanistan and celebrate the efforts of public servants and Defence Force members during the evacuation. Backed by an all-star band, he will be performing songs from his acclaimed Dust of Uruzgan album as well as new material drawing on his experiences working on the evacuation. Proceeds will support the purchase of educational supplies for recently arrived Afghan students to Canberra to be distributed in conjunction with Rotary and Red Cross.



From RSL Australia

### IMPORTANT CHANGES TO DEFENCE FORCE INCOME SUPPORT ALLOWANCE (DFISA)

RSL Australia has welcomed changes to the way veterans can access income support from the Department of Veterans' Affairs. RSL Australia recommended changes to improve access to rental assistance in its submission to the 2021 Senate inquiry regarding TPI payments.

From 1 January 2022, the Disability Compensation Payment (formerly known as Disability Pension) became exempt from the income test under the Social Security Act 1991. The means test imposed on Rent Assistance for certain veterans and dependants has been removed and those veterans are now eligible for Rent Assistance, or an increased rate of Rent Assistance effective from 1 January 2022. Centrelink payments such as the Age Pension will increase as a result, removing the need for DFISA.

RSL Australia's submission took into account the detailed research and recommendations made by the Productivity Commission, KPMG Review of TPI Benefits, and Independent Review into the TPI Payment by David Tune AO PSM.

The current payment rate was found to be reasonable when considering the additional benefits that veterans on TPI qualify for, such as Centrelink payments and other DVA allowances. However, RSL Australia's submission also recommended that the Department of Veterans' Affairs make every effort to provide more support to TPI veterans in relation to rehabilitation and other services, and that thorough research be done on the overall wellbeing of TPI veterans.

Those who had previously received DFISA found that on the first payday of 2022, 13 January, part of the DFISA payment was reduced. On payday 27 January, there will be no DFISA paid. However, social security payments from Centrelink will increase accordingly.

The part payment on 13 January is because the effective date of 1 January falls in the middle of a pay period. As Centrelink paydays differ for each person, they do not align with DVA veteran paydays. Veterans can check pay day amounts in their Centrelink online account and their DVA MyService account.

Veterans and their partners do not need to take any action, as the payments will be made automatically.

Letters advising of the changes to veterans were delayed, meaning some veterans did not receive a personal explanation as to why their DFISA payment had been reduced prior to 13 January. The DVA has apologised for any distress this may have caused.



**From:** Benz, Victoria <[Victoria.Benz@dva.gov.au](mailto:Victoria.Benz@dva.gov.au)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, 20 January 2022 10:53 AM  
**To:** Benz, Victoria <[Victoria.Benz@dva.gov.au](mailto:Victoria.Benz@dva.gov.au)>  
**Cc:** DC.NSW.AND.ACT <[DC.NSW.AND.ACT@dva.gov.au](mailto:DC.NSW.AND.ACT@dva.gov.au)>  
**Subject:** Update from Deputy Commissioner NSW/ACT [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Good morning ESO and veteran colleagues,

Firstly, a warm welcome to 2022 to you all. I hope you were able to safe and well over the new year period, and enjoy some rest and relaxation ahead of a big year. I'm pleased to be back and look forward to continuing to work with you all this year to support our veterans and their families.

In returning, there are a few important updates to provide – please see below.

### Rapid Antigen Testing (RAT) for veterans

Following a National Cabinet decision on Wednesday 5 January 2022, the Prime Minister announced that Commonwealth Concession Card holders will be given free access to Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs).

All DVA Gold, White and Orange Card holders are eligible to receive up to 10 free RATs over a three month period. In addition, DVA clients who do not hold a Gold, White or Orange Card may access free tests if they have a:

- Pensioner Concession Card
- Commonwealth Seniors Health Care card
- Health Care Card
- Low Income Health Card

Free RATs are provided by pharmacists, using your DVA card.

Please note, that if individuals are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms they **should not** attend a pharmacist and instead visit a testing site for free testing. Nearest testing clinics can be found here:

In NSW: [COVID-19 testing clinics | NSW Government](#)

In ACT: [Where to get tested in the ACT - COVID-19](#)

## Defence Force Income Support Allowance (DFISA)

There has been concerns reported last week by veterans and their families via social media relating to payment changes with the recent cessation of the Defence Force Income Support Allowance (DFISA).

From 1 January 2022, the Disability Compensation Payment (formerly known as Disability Pension) became exempt from the income test under the *Social Security Act 1991*. Centrelink payments such as the Age Pension will increase as a result, removing the need for DFISA. In addition, Rent Assistance became available or increased for some veterans.

Those who had previously received DFISA found that on the first payday of 2022, 13 January, part of the DFISA payment was reduced. On payday 27 January, there will be no DFISA paid. However, social security payments from Centrelink will increase accordingly.

The part payment on 13 January is because the effective date of 1 January falls in the middle of a pay period. As Centrelink paydays differ for each person, they do not align with DVA veteran paydays. Veterans can check pay day amounts in their Centrelink online account and their DVA MyService account.

Veterans and their partners do not need to do anything, as the payments will be made automatically.

Unfortunately, some of the letters advising of the changes to veterans were delayed, meaning some veterans did not receive a personal explanation as to why their DFISA payment had been reduced prior to 13 January. We apologise for any distress this may have caused.

Further information can be found on the DFISA page of the DVA website under [What's New](#).

Regards,

Victoria  
**Victoria Benz**  
Deputy Commissioner, NSW & ACT  
**Department of Veterans' Affairs**

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## DFISA Talking Points Background

In December 2021, legislation was passed which results in an increase in social security payments, removing the need for the Defence Force Income Support Allowance (DFISA) and increasing Rent Assistance to some disabled veterans receiving income support.

These changes took effect on 1 January 2022.

It implemented the recommendations of the review by Mr David Tune into the adequacy of the Totally and Permanently Incapacitated (TPI) payment. It:

- o exempts Disability Compensation Payment (formerly known as Disability Pension) as income under the Social Security Act. These changes simplify the support system for veterans and dependants and negates the need for the DFISA.

- o removes a means test imposed on Rent Assistance for certain veterans and dependants. These veterans and dependants are now eligible for Rent Assistance, or an increased rate of Rent Assistance.

- o clarifies that the Disability Compensation Payment is a compensation payment, and that it should not be confused with other income

support payments such as Centrelink's Disability Support Pension.

No veteran will receive lower total payments as a result of this measure. Many will receive more due to now being eligible for Rent Assistance, either for the first time or at a higher rate.

#### **Why don't I have my Defence Force Income Support Allowance in my bank account?**

The Defence Force Income Support Allowance is no longer needed because your underlying income support payment has increased by the same amount.

This is because your Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) Disability Compensation Payment (formerly known as Disability Pension) is no longer taken into account in the income test for your social security payment (Centrelink payment or Age Pension paid by DVA).

You should have received a letter from DVA explaining this, however, some letters have been delayed.

Please see the DVA website DFISA page under "What's New" for further information.

Please check your payments online with Centrelink, and DVA's MyService.

#### **Are veterans receiving less money because of these changes?**

No, you will receive the same total amount, or perhaps more if you are privately renting.

Please check your online Centrelink account for information about your payment (or your MyService account if you receive Age Pension from DVA), which should have increased by the same amount as your previous Defence Force Income Support Allowance.

If your payment has not increased, please consider other circumstances that might have changed such as an increase in your income or assets, a change in relationship e.g. single to couple status, a move in residence.

If your circumstances have not changed, then please ring on 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372) or email DVA (GeneralEnquiries@dva.gov.au) with your veteran file number and DVA will investigate.

You may have never received your social security payment before and only received Disability Compensation Payment (formerly known

as Disability Pension) and the Defence Force Income Support Allowance from DVA.

If this is the case, please access your online Centrelink account and check that you are receiving it now.

Please note that the change is staggered over two paydays because the change took effect on 1 January 2022, which is in the middle of two pay periods.

The pay day of 27 January will show no DFISA and the full amount of your social security payment.

Note also that pay days at Centrelink are different for different customers, unlike DVA which has the same pay day for all veterans and their families. Thus, the Centrelink payday may not align with the DVA payday.

#### **Will veterans need to apply for rent assistance?**

No. DVA has contacted those income support recipients who may be eligible and sought up-to-date rent information from them. This information was used to undertake the assessment of Rent Assistance with payments commencing on the first payday of 13 January 2022.

If a veteran thinks they have missed out, they may be able to update their rental details on MyService or ring DVA.

Those eligible would be in receipt of the Disability Compensation Payment and Service Pension, Income Support Supplement or Veteran Payment.

They will also need to provide proof of private rent paid above \$127.60 per fortnight for singles and \$206.40 combined for couples.

The maximum amount of Rent Assistance paid is \$142.80 per fortnight for singles and \$134.60 per fortnight for couples combined

**Thanks to the Brits for this humorous account:**

Lt. Colonel Robert Maclaren retired from the British Army in 2001 after a long fulfilling career. On the day that he retired he received a letter from the Personnel Department of the Ministry of Defence setting out details of his pension and, in particular, the tax-free 'lump sum' award, (based upon completed years of service), that he would receive in addition to his monthly pension.

The letter read,

"Dear Lt. Colonel Maclaren,

We write to confirm that you retired from the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards on 1st March 2001 at the rank of Lt Colonel, having been commissioned into the British Army at Edinburgh Castle as a 2nd Lieutenant on 1st February 1366. Accordingly your lump sum payment, based on years served, has been calculated as £68,500. You will receive a cheque for this amount in due course.

Yours sincerely,  
Army Paymaster"

Col Maclaren replied;

"Dear Paymaster,

Thank you for your recent letter confirming that I served as an officer in the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards between 1st February 1366 and 1st March 2001 – a total period of 635 years and 1 month. I note however that you have calculated my lump sum to be £68, 500, which seems to be considerably less than it should be bearing in mind my length of service since I received my commission from King Edward III.

By my calculation, allowing for interest payments and currency fluctuations, my lump sum should actually be £6, 427, 586, 619. 47p.

I look forward to receiving a cheque for this amount in due course.

Yours sincerely,

Robert Maclaren (Lt Col Retd)"

A month passed by and then in early April, a stout manilla envelope from the Ministry of Defence in Edinburgh dropped through Col Maclaren's letter box, it read:

"Dear Lt Colonel Maclaren,

We have reviewed the circumstances of your case as outlined in your recent letter to us dated 8th March inst. We do indeed confirm that you were commissioned into the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards by King Edward III at Edinburgh Castle on 1st February 1366, and that you served continuously for the following 635 years and 1 month. We have re-calculated your pension and have pleasure in confirming that the lump sum payment due to you is indeed £6, 427, 586, 619. 47p.

However,

We also note that according to our records you are the only surviving officer who had command responsibility during the following campaigns and battles; The Wars of the Roses 1455 -1485 (Including the battles of Bosworth Field, Barnet and Towton) The Civil War 1642 -1651 (Including the battles Edge Hill, Naseby and the conquest of Ireland) The Napoleonic War 1803 – 1815 (including the battle of Waterloo and the Peninsular War) The Crimean War (1853 – 1856) (including the battle of Sevastopol and the Charge of the Light Brigade) The Boer War (1899 - 1902).

We would therefore wish to know what happened to the following, which do not appear to have been returned to Stores by you on completion of operations:

9765 Cannon

26,785 Swords

12,889 Pikes

127,345 Rifles (with bayonets)

28,987 horses (fully kitted)

Plus three complete marching bands with instruments and banners.

WE have calculated the total cost of these items and they amount to £6,427,518.119.47p. We have therefore subtracted this sum from your lump sum, leaving a residual amount of £68,500, for which you will receive a cheque in due course.

Yours sincerely

Army Paymaster"



**We regret that Coffee Catch Up FRI-DAY has been cancelled due to the Covid situation.**



**Please note that only a few members of the Eddison Day Club still meet for lunch at midday Fridays. Please check and advise Peter Sutton on 0478 630 038 if you wish to join them at the Irish Club.**

## **Contact Us**

Give us a call for more information or access to our services

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Visit us on the web at  
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Office hours are  
9am-3pm Mon-Fri

Our newsletters and items of current interest also appear on our website

[www.rslwoden.org.au](http://www.rslwoden.org.au)