

south east asian treaty organisation (seato)

december 2004 nurse update: 10

Comcare claims - progress report

Several outstanding claims lodged by SEATO Nurses under Comcare are progressing through the conference process before being heard before the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) next year. While Comcare has undertaken in the Memorandum of Understanding with the ANF, to determine liability under a more beneficial standard of proof, rather than the more difficult standard applied under Comcare, some claims are still being rejected. Greg Isolani, the solicitor working on behalf of many claimants will continue to pursue a satisfactory outcome in relation to these matters.

Third Vietnam Veterans' Mortality Study and Cancer Incidence in Vietnam Veterans Study

This study will update the mortality figures for Vietnam veterans and for the first time investigate cancer incidence in Vietnam veterans. The Cancer Incidence study is expected to be completed by the end of the year and the mortality and other volumes in early 2005. Check the DVA website for further details: http://www.dva.gov.au/adf/health_studies/mainhs.htm

Health study - Female Vietnam Veterans

The lack of information available concerning the female veteran community has certainly been an issue in relation to some claims for SEATO nurses. The results of the health study of female veterans conducted as part of the Morbidity of Vietnam Veterans study published in 1998 were inconclusive partly because of the small number of women who participated in the study. The report recommended the development of a register of female Vietnam veterans to expand their profile and enhance any further study of this group. Further to this recommendation, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), on behalf of the Department of Veterans' Affairs, is establishing a database with contact details for Australian women who had a role in the Vietnam war. This is an important first step towards the conduct of further health studies for women, providing sufficient numbers of women come forward.

The database will be known as the Female Vietnam Veteran & Civilian Health Register and will contain a record of Australian women who participated in the Vietnam war in various roles. Further information, including the privacy arrangements is available on the AIHW website: <http://www.aihw.gov.au/veteran/fvchr/index.html> or contact Robert van der Hoek email: Robert.vanderhoek@aihw.gov.au or phone: 02 6244 1133

SEATO nurses who are members of the CN-ASTV Group may receive further information from Robert van der Hoek in the mail in the near future.

Focus for 2005

The ANF with the CN-ASTV Group, will push for changes to the Comcare scheme to make it more suitable for people who are making claims as a result of their service in a war zone or areas of conflict. Changes are required to assist SEATO nurses and others who may volunteer their services for deployment into war zones or the like in the future.

It is disappointing that the Government has perpetuated the existing anomalies in the Veterans' Entitlements Act regarding civilians in the new Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004. Once again the position of civilians will be left to the discretion of the Minister who can deem certain persons members of the Australian Defence Force for purposes of the Act.

The ANF will continue to argue that Ministerial determinations must be declared before a request is made for civilian deployment and that those considering deployment be made fully aware of the compensation arrangements available to them.

And finally...

Best wishes for a happy Christmas and a safe and peaceful New Year from the ANF Federal Office.

