

south east asian treaty organisation (seato)

september 2002 nurse update: 4

Review of Veterans' Entitlements

The Independent Review Committee established to examine anomalies in eligibility for access to veterans' benefits and qualifying service has completed its round of public and private consultations and is in the process of preparing its report. The Committee is due to present its recommendations to the Government by mid November this year.

In addition to the joint submission made by the Civilian Nurses Group and ANF, several SEATO nurses made individual written submissions and attended public meetings held across Australia.

Below is a summary of the representations made on behalf of SEATO surgical team members:

- > May - Janelle Allan with the New South Wales Nurses' Association spoke at the public meeting held in Sydney.
- > July - Dot Angell, Maureen Spicer with the ANF and Greg Isolani, (Solicitor) met with the Committee in Melbourne to discuss the ANF submission.
- > The next day, Daphne Amos and Bernie Dunn both spoke at the public meeting held in Melbourne.
- > Also in July, Helen Taplin, Betty Lockwood and Yvonne McLaren all spoke at the public meeting held in Adelaide, including media coverage. In addition Aileen Monck from SA made a written submission.



From all reports the claims by SEATO nurses were well received by the Review Committee. At the meeting with the Committee in Melbourne the Committee appeared sympathetic to the view put to them by the ANF and the SEATO nurse representatives. The Committee did not however give any indication as to what their recommendations on this issue might be.

Thanks to the great work of the many SEATO nurses involved, we are confident that the Committee has a comprehensive account of the involvement of the SEATO medical and surgical teams in Vietnam. The personal accounts and experiences detailed by SEATO nurses reinforced the written submissions and our claim that SEATO team members are entitled to claim benefits under the Veterans' Entitlements Act. We must now await the release of the Committee's report and recommendations.

Third Vietnam Veteran Mortality Study announced

The Government has commissioned a third study into the rates and causes of death, as well as the incidence of cancer amongst the men and women who served in Vietnam.

The study will be guided by a consultative forum with representatives of the Vietnam Veterans Association, the Vietnam Veterans Federation, the RSL, the Australian Veterans and Defence Services Council and DVA. An expert scientific Advisory Committee has also been established to oversee the study.

Death and cancer rates will be compared with those personnel who did not go to Vietnam as well as the general population. SEATO medical and surgical team members were included in the last study conducted five years ago. We are in the process of confirming this will also be the case this time around.

Honours Thesis on Nurses in Vietnam

Kelly Lu from the University of New South Wales is working on an honours thesis on nurses who served in Vietnam and how they have been represented in published materials and accounts of the war in Vietnam. She is interviewing nurses and distributing questionnaires as part her research and would welcome contact from nurses who may be interested in becoming involved. Her email address is: kellylu@amaze.net.au or contact Debbie Richards at the ANF Federal Office on 03 96395211 for other contact details.