

Message From The CEO

Many of you will have seen on television and read in the newspapers recently of the alarming rate at which our veterans – most of them young men in the prime of their lives - are succumbing to suicide. At last count, 43 veterans have suicided this year alone, exceeding the grim toll of deaths of our Servicemen killed in the 13 year Afghanistan conflict. Sadly, this number will increase.



We have heard first hand too many stories from members themselves, and their loved ones, who say they have come home depressed, anxious and angry. Many are suffering symptoms of PTSD and do not know how or where to seek help. As a community, it is time for all of us to speak out about this national tragedy and work together to find solutions to the ills facing many who have served in our Defence Force.

Bravery Trust recently assisted two families of veterans who succumbed to years of declining mental and physical health, one of whom experienced periodic homelessness. We were able to assist with the costs of respectful, dignified funerals for these two men. Both of their families were understandably overcome by grief at their extraordinary loss, which was compounded by their difficult financial circumstances. Our team supported the families quickly and with great sensitivity to their circumstances.

This issue presents a unique opportunity for ESO's to work together more collaboratively, sharing information, resources and flexibility of care to provide the support our Service people need as they transition back to civilian life. We will continue to work closely with other ESO's to effect the best outcomes for our Servicemen and women and their families.

Until next time,

Sean Farrell
CEO

Chairman meets Minister Julie Bishop

Our Chairman recently met with Foreign Affairs Minister The Honourable Julie Bishop MP in Perth. Peter briefed her on the assistance we provide veterans and families, currently at a rate in excess of \$100,000 per month. The growing concern of veteran suicides was also discussed. Minister Bishop has agreed to communicate with Veterans Affairs Minister Dan Tehan on our behalf for further discussion on government support for Bravery Trust.



Bravery Trust Chairman Peter Fitzpatrick AM spent time discussing the issues of veteran welfare with Foreign Affairs Minister Julie Bishop in Perth recently.

Bravery Trust Newsletter

September 2016

Bravery Trust provides urgent financial support to veterans, current and former members of the Australian Defence Force and their families. We provide assistance to those who have suffered injury or illness as a result of their service and who are experiencing hardship.

Thanks to your support, from 2012 - 2016*:



1787 current & former members & their families assisted

> \$1.6 million in total aid disbursed



\$613, 027 in housing & utilities aid

84% of applications are for mental health concerns



*Figures approximately to August 2016

Bravery Trust provides last line of support for bereaved family

Christopher (Chris) Stiles was a 15 year veteran of the Australian Army's 1RAR unit based in Queensland. He deployed to East Timor on two occasions as part of Operation Tanager (2000-2001) and Operation Citadel (2003). During his service he was exposed to a number of traumatic events, including being witness to the accidental grenade death of one of his mates during a training exercise in Malaysia.

Chris was also troubled by the suspected link between PTSD-like symptoms and an antimalarial trial drug which many deployed East Timor soldiers, including himself, had taken as part of the conditions of their deployment.

Having enlisted as a typical, happy-go-lucky Australian, following in the footsteps of three successive generations of Stiles men before him, Chris discharged from the Army in 2006 and led an increasingly frustrated, troubled life.

He separated from his wife and became estranged from his two sons as he struggled with the physical and mental health issues resulting from his service. These included injuries to his leg and back and a diagnosis of PTSD, anxiety and depression. Chris'



claim for compensation with the Department of Veterans' Affairs was also still ongoing, a cause of further frustration for him.

By the time Chris took his own life in August 2016 he had lost his job, his family and his home, enduring bouts of homelessness which exacerbated his severe decline in mental state and disconnection from his social support network.

Chris' sister, Lisa Alward, contacted Bravery Trust to assist with the costs of a dignified funeral service for his family and Army mates to attend. Speaking of the support provided to the family in the aftermath

of Chris' tragic death, the family said "We are extremely grateful for the support of Bravery Trust ... it is not just financial support but it contributes in a way to emotional assistance knowing that there is one less thing to worry about. We cannot express our appreciation enough."

Bravery Trust was able to support the Stiles family quickly and sensitively in their time of overwhelming grief as they mourned the brother, father, son and friend who had given so much for his country.

Q&A with our Ambassadors



Justin Langer AM played 105 international cricket test matches scoring 7,696 runs including 23 test centuries. In 2009 he was appointed as assistant coach of the Australian cricket team, and in 2012 he became coach of Western Australia for both the Sheffield Shield and Big Bash League teams, a role he still holds.

Q: Why are you passionate about veterans issues and supporting the work of Bravery Trust?

JL: Most mornings my daughters and I drive past the SAS Barracks here in WA, as it is just around the corner from where we live. Over time we have decided to salute the Barracks and the heroes that train out of there, because we respect what they do for us and our great country. In a sense we are making the salute to all of our current soldiers, and the veterans, who sacrifice so much to keep our country as the "lucky land." We can never underestimate what our Defence Force does for every one of us and for that I am a passionate supporter of Bravery Trust.

Q: What can we do as a community to show our support for current and former serving members?

JL: For one we can show our respect for what they do. In life, a sense of appreciation is a powerful motivator and we should appreciate their sacrifice, dedication and commitment to our great country. Secondly, we can support and encourage

organisations like Bravery Trust who do a wonderful job for our members. Finally, one of the things I am most proud about being Australian is that we are great at rallying behind the underdog, or a worthwhile cause. In this world where there are so many causes to support, I would love to see our community, at the very least, consider Bravery Trust as one of their priority organisations in the future.

Q: What parallels do you see in sport and the Defence Force, if any (eg mateship, working as a team, etc)?

JL: A friend of mine, Brett Warner, from the SAS once said to me, "Justin, most people can live the dream, but not many people can live the reality." In other words many people like the idea of wearing a green beret, a baggy green cap or driving a nice car. The dream is the easy bit. The harder part is doing the work, making the sacrifices, riding the highs and lows and focussing with discipline and commitment to achieve your goals. Dreaming big, but then executing the plan and living the tough reality of being successful. The other part is looking after your mates and working as a team to get the job done. It's a great part of sport, and I imagine the Defence Force, when you work hard together towards a goal, big or small, and then celebrate a success together. I love this about being part of a team.

Q: Do you have a personal connection to the Defence Force?

JL: No really close personal ties besides my deep respect for what it takes to be a part of the Defence Force looking after our country.

Q: How do you define success?

JL: Success to me is having the courage to dream and set goals, and then having the discipline, courage and focus to do the work and make the sacrifices required to achieve your goals. Success is also bouncing back from the inevitable adversities of life and making a difference in the lives of as many people as you can.



Paul Alexander

Retired Surgeon General of the ADF, Dr Paul Alexander AO, has had an extensive career spanning more than 30 years in the Australian Army and across clinical executive posts and board positions in military, private practice, commercial and not-for-profit organisations. Earlier in his career, Paul served as the Regimental Medical Officer for the Special Air Service Regiment in Perth where he successfully completed SAS selection training.

Q: You are a medical doctor and a former officer in the Army. What are your insights into the mental health challenges many in our Defence Force face when they return home?

PA: I believe the greatest challenge is still one of reducing the stigma associated with declaring a mental health problem during service as well as after discharge. In addition when a person decides it is time to seek help, particularly post discharge, the system remains difficult to navigate and access.

Q: What prompted you to join the Army?

PA: I was fortunate to be raised in a family where service through Defence was integral to our family history. My father served as a pilot in the Pacific during WW2 and I had



Kevin Sheedy

Kevin Sheedy AM played and coached over 900 VFL/AFL football games in a career spanning 47 years. He was inducted into the Australian Football Hall of Fame in 2008

Q: How did the concept of the ANZAC Day game come about?

KS: I just felt that not enough people knew the history of ANZAC Day, particularly young people. We all learn things in different ways. I learned a lot of things about history, about geography, about life, through football, and I thought an ANZAC Day game of football, where we respect what those young people did in the Dardanelles and elsewhere in conflicts all over the world, would be a good way to help the younger generation learn about their courage and sacrifice.

Q: What bearing did your period of National Service have on your life?

KS: A huge bearing, I went from playing in a VFL grand final on the Saturday to reporting to Puckapunyal on the Monday. Doing national service was the place where I first discovered

numerous members of the family who served on the Western Front during the First World War. Having commenced my medical studies, I took the opportunity to join the Army as a medical student, giving me the opportunity to pursue both a military and medical career.

Q: What can we do as a society to improve how we care for vulnerable Servicemen and women?

PA: Of particular interest is how we may influence the health sector to improve care provided through better education and communication with the sector. Appropriate care for our Servicemen and women relies very much upon our health providers having an understanding of the modern soldier as well as the knowledge about what services are appropriate and available. This requires us to effectively engage this community.

Q: Why is it that many veterans struggle to admit their vulnerabilities post service?

PA: I believe both the general Australian community at large as well as the medical community have a limited understanding and knowledge of the challenges faced by our service men and women and the trauma they have been exposed to. It is then difficult to explain and admit vulnerability to health care providers who may not always empathise as they do not understand the issues.

Q: How do you define success?

PA: Success is about maintaining happiness throughout your life and can be achieved by us maintaining our physical, emotional and social wellbeing and by continuing to contribute in whatever way we can to society.

that I might be able to coach. I learned that there was a different sort of courage to the one that Tommy Hafey kept asking us to show in a game of football. I also learned how big a hole in the ground a small amount of plastic explosive can make!

Q: Why are you passionate about veterans issues and supporting the work of Bravery Trust?

KS: I think people who are prepared to serve the country in the defence forces, ready and willing to fight for this country, deserve all the support they can get while they are serving, and afterwards.

Q: What more can the AFL do to support our current and former serving members of the ADF?

KS: Well I think the AFL does a pretty good job already, particularly on ANZAC Day. Perhaps one thing the AFL can do is to encourage other sports to follow its lead.

Q: How do you define success?

KS: Well first you have to ask yourself what is success, is it winning a game of football, is it being a good son or daughter, or being a good parent? Is it discovering a cure for a disease, or making a million dollars on a business deal? I think being successful is knowing what you want to get out of yourself, out of life, then go at it as hard as you can. Then one day, you might wake up and think, gee, I've done that and that'll be a pretty special moment. But if you're a really successful person, that won't be the end of it, you will find another challenge, and go at that as hard as you can.



Garth Callendar

Garth Callendar is a former Major in the Australian Army, serving a distinguished 17 year career with deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq. In 2004 he became the first Australian casualty to be evacuated for emergency treatment after an IED detonated under his tank. After an arduous 12 month recovery Garth returned to the Middle East to lead a team identifying insurgent bomb makers. He is currently working with the NSW state government on delivering the Veterans Employment Program across the public sector.

Q: What prompted you to join the Army?

GC: Initially I had joined as a directionless nineteen-year-old looking for adventure. But I stayed in the Army and sought responsibility and promotion as I found the military to be a true calling. I understood that a career in uniform, serving the country, provides opportunities to have positive impacts on people's lives, both locally and internationally.

Q: What difficulties did you personally face transitioning back to civilian life?

GC: All too often there is an expectation that a military person is injured or somehow broken as a result of their service, or that they conform to some 'Hollywood' stereotype. These misconceptions are unhelpful for many

individuals looking to establish themselves in a new career on leaving defence – negative preconceptions are something that I had to work through transitioning back to civilian life.

Q: What can we do as a society to improve how we care for vulnerable diggers?

GC: Viewing veterans for their skills, not their scars, but also having safeguards in place for when things don't go to plan and additional support is needed.

Furthermore, when an individual who has not fared well as a result of their service will be actively working to recover and move on - any stigma placed on them due to their injury or illness is detrimental to their recovery. Getting the balance right is key.

Q: What suggestions of support do you have for the partners and families of diggers when they return home?

GC: Most military people return from overseas active service 'standing and smiling', however in some cases more than just time to reintegrate is needed. Partners and families should understand that there will be a period of transitioning back into the household and normal life, but they should seek help if things don't seem to be right. Help is out there – the sooner a problem is identified, the sooner it can be fixed.

Q: How do you define success?

GC: Success will be when military people who have struggled in one aspect or another have been able to easily access support and move on with their lives as quickly as possible.

More generally, success will be when veterans are seen as pillars of our society, and their vast experience and valuable skills are understood and respected.

Pro Bono supporter profile: RSM Financial Services Australia

Outside of its foundation partnership with Coles, Bravery Trust is lucky to have the support of a number of corporate entities who provide their professional services free of charge for the benefit of our beneficiaries and wider team. One of these is RSM, a national financial services company whose Perth director, Rod Edwards, has been a strong supporter of our work with veterans struggling with health and financial difficulties.

Since July 2015 RSM's Perth team has provided pro bono debt management and budgeting advice for 35 of our applicants whose financial circumstances have added significant stress to their ongoing health burdens. Most of these applicants, who include veterans and their partners, have credit issues with their banks and overdue bills due to their inability to work.

Rod estimates 90% of the Bravery Trust beneficiaries his advisers have worked with are in poor financial predicaments due to their ongoing mental health battles. He said "We're witnessing a growing number of veterans seeking short-term assistance to pay bills and put food on the table. Some applicant don't answer our calls fearing we're the next creditor hunting for a payment."

RSM's advisers have helped our beneficiaries negotiate credit issues with their banks and put in place basic budgets to help restore financial stability once DVA entitlements and ComSuper payments come through. Whilst they often find the work quite confronting, they are also rewarded when they are able to assist a veteran and/or their partner back into financial stability.



L-R: Robert Zammit, Rod Edwards and Chris Allen have provided invaluable advice to many of our beneficiaries.

The Long Ride Home hits Australia

Asia done and dusted, next up - Australia! That is the feeling of Laurie "Truck" Sams as he cycles his way from Hanoi, Vietnam to Sydney to raise awareness and funds to support veterans suffering from PTSD and other injuries.

Laurie arrived back in Australia last month to commence the second phase of his epic 10,000km six month bike ride across two continents. A former SASR warrant Officer, Laurie lost a leg below the knee in a parachuting accident 20 years ago, and says he's been enjoying standing up since getting off the bike in Singapore to fly to Perth. Understandable after 73 days and 5830 kilometres in the saddle!

Laurie knows all too well the

devastating effects of PTSD – he suffered it himself after returning from Vietnam in the 1970's and understands the trauma that so many of our current-day veterans are facing. "I've been down that

dark tunnel and the experience made me want to help others who've had to deal with trauma-related injury – not just soldiers but police, fire, ambulance, nurses and other emergency workers as well."

Laurie set up The Long Ride Home as a friendship initiative between Australia and Asia during the 50th year anniversary commemorations of the Battle of Long Tan. He wants to also provide tangible support to injured veterans struggling with their demons. His fundraising efforts will support a small number of ex-service charities, one of which is Bravery Trust. Further information and details about Laurie's stops along the route to Sydney over the coming months can be found at www.thelongridehome.com.au.



Laurie visited the Kings Park War Memorial before commencing the Australian leg of his journey.

Kalgoorlie Soldiers' Stomp

Dean Collins is a proud Kalgoorlie man and even prouder member of Kalgoorlie-Boulder's century-old army reserves unit known as 11 Platoon. After meeting inaugural Bravery Trust ambassador Dan Keighran when he joined the unit while working in the WA gold mines, Dean started thinking about how he could assist veterans and their families doing it tough.

Not one to do things by halves, early in 2015 Dean enlisted the support of his fellow reserves unit members, a motley group of seven men and their support driver, and together they set about organising the Kalgoorlie Soldiers' Stomp, a 17 day, 570km trek on foot from Perth to Kalgoorlie, camping along the way and speaking to local community groups to raise funds for Bravery Trust.

Setting off from Perth on 12 November, the stompers battled heat, flies, tiredness and blisters that had to be seen to be believed. They arrived in Kalgoorlie on schedule on 28 November, walking the last 30 km into town with Dan Keighran who flew over especially to support them on behalf of Bravery Trust. The stompers had hoped to raise \$20,000, but their phenomenal efforts ended up with a remarkable final tally of more than \$30,000 for the Trust.

Not content with a one-off fundraiser, Dean has again decided to pull on his boots and enlist the support of his reserves unit for another event – 2016's Walk to Westonia. The stompers will set off on Remembrance Day and traverse some 300km over 8 days to finish up at Westonia. Dean's employer, Evolution Mining, who was a major financial and in-kind supporter of the 2015 event has again come on-board to support the stompers with an initial \$8000 donation. The

stomp will conclude at Evolution Mining's Edna May operation at Westonia on 19 November.

Bravery Trust cannot thank Dean, his stomp crew and Evolution Mining enough for their unprecedented levels of enthusiasm and support for the work we do. More news will follow on the stompers' progress in subsequent editions of the newsletter.



Dean (standing top left) and the stomp crew spoke at a community fundraiser in Southern Cross, WA.

Beer & Beef Club WA supports Bravery Trust

Bravery Trust Chairman Peter Fitzpatrick knows many people in WA given his long career in both the Defence Force and in commercial business across a range of sectors. One of the organisations Peter has been a part of is the Beer & Beef Club WA, a group of business and hospitality professionals who meet monthly to raise funds for charitable organisations and to help further the education of promising young craft brewers and apprentice chefs.

Once a year, the Beer & Beef Club hosts a charity auction and lunch and we are delighted that they have chosen Bravery Trust as the recipient of funds raised this year.

The lunch will be held at Rockpool Bar & Grill in Perth on Saturday 22 October, and there will be several items for auction, including some provided by our ambassadors. Justin Langer AM has provided signed merchandise from the Perth Scorchers and Garth Callender has personally inscribed two of his books, *After The Blast*, an account of his personal experience in Iraq.

The lunch is open to all interested parties. For ticket information and further details please contact Sharon Tee at Bravery Trust on 1300 652 103 or email sharontee@braverytrust.org.au



BEER AND BEEF CLUB - Perth
Western Australian Business Professionals
Founded 1987

Event Details

Date: 22nd October 2016
Time: 12 - 3PM
Dress: Jacket & Tie
Cost: \$160 pp
includes 3 course meal and drinks

BRAVERY TRUST *Supporting those who serve*



Perth

The President and Committee of
THE BEER & BEEF CLUB – PERTH
Cordially invite you to the
ANNUAL FUNDRAISING LUNCH
in support of Bravery Trust

at

ROCKPOOL
BAR & GRILL ★ PERTH

For information on how to secure your ticket please contact - Bravery Trust - 1300 652 103 - admin@braverytrust.org.au

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