

President Kaye Smith

ADDRESS TO DANDENONG PROBUS CLUB – 6TH OCTOBER 2014

LEGACY

Legacy is a charity providing services to Australian families suffering financially and socially after the death of a spouse or parent, during or after their defence force service. At Melbourne Legacy we currently care for more than 16,000 widows and 350 dependants of the 90,000 widows and 1,900 children and disabled dependants throughout Australia.

*SK - 1500 widows.
88 DD + 6 children*

Legacy is dedicated to enhancing the lives and opportunities of our families through innovative and practical programs aimed at:

- The protection of individuals' and families' basic needs;
- Advocating for the entitlements, rights and benefits;
- Assisting families through bereavement; and
- Helping people thrive, despite their adversity and loss.

Legacy helps families, not just in the short term – Legacy is there for life.

2013 marked the 90th Anniversary of the commencement of Legacy, this organisation is uniquely Australian. Over the past 90 years many thousands of men, and more recently women, have volunteered a commitment to care for the hundreds of thousands

of families of incapacitated or deceased veterans; this includes allied veterans.

The Legacy organisation is made up of 49 autonomous Clubs throughout Australia with 1 Club in London. Legacy cares for around 90,000 war widows and around ¹¹²⁰~~120~~ dependants, both children and those with a disability, there are still about ²~~70~~ WW1 widows. Each Club has a properly constituted Board of Management; funds are raised locally and spent locally. Legacy is governed by Legacy Australia Council which comprises representatives from each of the capital city Clubs with a few from regional centres. The Council supports the Clubs and has a co-ordinating role to ensure that all governance issues are complied with. It communicates directly with government at the highest level. Headquarters are in Melbourne and it has 3 standing committees:

- National Pensions Committee
- National Marketing Committee, and
- National Aged Care Committee.

Legacy as we know it for WW2 generation will gradually wind down over the next 10 plus years as our Widows and Dependents age and reduce in numbers. On the other hand, the numbers of Third Generation Legacy beneficiaries arising from post WW2 conflicts

and deployments in Korea, Vietnam etc. will continue to increase over the coming years.

In addition we are already seeing the next generations, known as contemporary veterans of Legacy beneficiaries arising from conflicts and deployments from early 1990's.

Unfortunately the numbers we see in Legacy are far greater than those reported in media headlines. As has always been the case, the impacts of war can linger long after the conflict ends

Caring for the families of veterans still living, where the veteran is incapable of looking after his or her affairs is a growing area of our work.

A recent example of this aspect of Legacy's future, related to a living veteran, wife and 2 young children. The conditions at home became intolerable. The wife had heard broadly of what Legacy does and with the blessing of her husband, she approached us to see if we could help. And why wouldn't we?

In essence, she felt that she had run out of options and did not know where else to go. When she came to us she was at her wits end. Very quickly we were able to put them in touch with his Regiment in NSW to make a disability pension application, as well as direct them to the right agencies locally for a variety of assistance.

What Legacy was able to provide was compassion, understanding, guidance, some short term financial help to ensure the children were able to continue their education without disruption, and a good clean up of the house and back yard.

The wife has since received further education to allow her to get into the workforce with a view to establishing the families' independence. We remain willing to help if requested but not to interfere.

There are a number of similar stories around the country and they are growing.

Let me paint a picture of what Legacy can expect over the next 15 to 20 years.

There are about 50,000 men and women who have served overseas in the last 10 years who have had at least one tour. Some veterans have done 9 tours.

There are currently 90,000 serving ADF personnel – many of their families may need Legacy's help in the coming years. We understand there are some 2000 wounded and injured veterans currently serving in the ADF, they are being treated under the Defence's SWIP initiative for Severely Wounded and Injured Personnel who will be sent to Recovery Centres in Brisbane, Townsville & Darwin.

Legacy can expect to come across some of these Veterans and /or their families in the future.

Their needs are quite different to previous veterans, particularly WW1 & 2, Korea & Vietnam, there are greater expectations expected by these younger widows and their families; one of the main reasons is social media, they can talk to each other and compare what benefits they are receiving from different Legacy Clubs.

Legacy's immediate focus is also caring for an ageing widow population who are living longer but are experiencing a decline in socialisation. Legacy encourages widows to remain active and assists with transport issues, some medical costs and a variety of activities to keep them involved with their local community.

Changes in Governance and reporting mechanisms are placing further administrative responsibilities on volunteers and staff. The new ACNC Australian Charities and Not for Profit Commission now require all charities (approx. 600,000) to report annually on their activities and financial income and expenditure. This is good as it allows the public to see how their donations are being spent and places greater accountability upon the relevant charity.

Legacy continues to care for the many widows/ers and dependents of injured or disabled veterans.

Our job is not complete until the last of the widows and their dependents have passed on.

Thankyou

Questions